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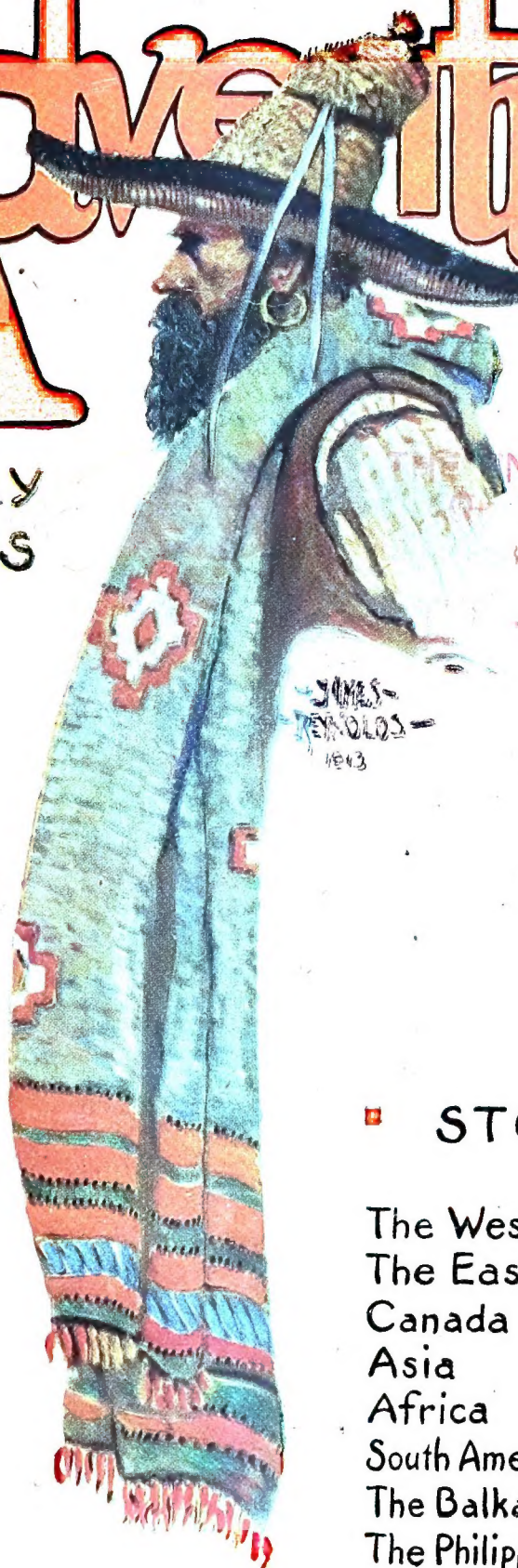

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ADVENTURE

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN *MANAGING EDITOR*

VOLUME 7 NUMBER 3

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ONE of the things that worries me is that there isn't space enough to let you read all the letters that come in from members of our Camp-Fire. It's certainly interesting to be part of a clearing-house for the wanderers of six continents and the Seven Seas, and I wish all the rest of you could have the same "look-in." At least, from the pile of letters I've carefully saved, I can select a few at random each month and pass them along. This one, for example:

Am at present in this section of the country (Idaho) with a string of bucking horses, and am doing fairly well. Expect to buck my ponies in Yellowstone Park for the edification of the tourists, as the hotels up there are offering a pretty fair price for attractions of that kind.

We, that is my pardner and myself, entered in the bucking contest at Rigby on the Fourth and carried away the first prize, second prize, best bucking-horse prize, and the steer-riding prize. Not bad for one of the Camp-Fire boys? I rode the bull and one of the horses bareback, and didn't get piled.—No. C 105.

HERE is a letter from one of the many now settled down in a staid and solid business or profession, who nevertheless can not forget the old days of wandering:

Spurred by many of your stories, and knowing some of the men who wrote them and lived them—and some of the incidents which supplied materials for them — I am moved to write you just because I want to get in closer touch with the good comrades of the Camp-Fire.

I have lived in some of the wild places and would be back there somewhere now did physical conditions permit. I personally knew the man—a German named Wilhelm Gerdeau—who first mapped the route from the Upper Amazon to Payuta and the Pacific, and lost his life in the effort. He carried my old saber and my blessing with him, and I went as far as Iquitos to see him on the way. It was above the Pongo de Mauseriche (which means nothing to those who do not know) that he met what we all hope for—a soldier's death. He wrote to me with his left hand his last message and it came down the Amazon to me weeks after his bones were picked clean.

BUT that is another story, and that phrase has become a platitude, though I can well understand how Kipling first wrote it. There is so much to say about those countries and it is so impossible to say it. Fiction never equals the naked truth. There was another Englishman I knew up the Madeira——Oh, man, if I could only talk to you!

But I wanted to say that the 50-foot snake that the expedition has set out to find is waiting for them in Brazil, *and then some.* When they come back with the evidence, some of the rest of us may open up.

And then there are other countries and islands. A good many of them. Dear man, I have seen them and I burn with the lust to take them for mine own, and the memory of their palm-fringed fronts incites me to barbarous plans.

If I can get over to New York this Winter I will introduce to you a great, big, modest man who made the first flag that ever floated over Brazil (after Dom Pedro), and has also lent a modest but efficient arm to various other American upheavals.—JNO. S. BONNER.

LIKE No. W 100 and several others, No. W 71 was one of our "Wanted" items that drew an especially large number of replies from the adventurous.

Before giving you the letter of explanation from No. W 71, a word on answering "Wanted" items.

In some cases there have been as many as 300 applications, so you can see it pays to write quickly, state your case in full, give references if possible, enclose stamped and addressed envelope, etc., if you expect to win out over several hundred other men. When you answer an item, give the other

(Continued on page 220)

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(My commission expires March 30, 1914.)

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JANUARY
1914
VOLUME 7
NUMBER 3

A SOLDIER AND A GENTLEMAN

by

TALBOT MUNDY

CHAPTER I

GENTLEMEN, SIR!

My creed is this: God is a gentleman.
And if God made the Universe, and made it well,
And since our duty is to be like God,
Therefore the things that common mortals do
Are better done; the thoughts the others think
Are better thought, by gentlemen.

THE steam went up, and the stink and the miasma, over green and gruesome Rajahbatkhowa; and with the frequency and fluency of horsemen to the manner born the Tail-Twisters cursed Bengal and the Bengal Government, all Bengalis, the climate, food, flies, high heaven and any minor matter on which a curse could hang.

The Tail-Twisters are not Bengalis. They—so help them—are a regiment of Bengal Cavalry, paid for by the Bengal Government, but altogether undefiled thereby.

Their officers are Englishmen, mostly younger sons, rightly and righteously possessed of an ambition to prove themselves better than the next man.

Cowardice is the only cardinal sin they recognize, although there are one or two admitted indiscretions that they frown at; not being "fit" for instance, is awfully poor form. They admit, too, that their creed would not fit cads; it is registered and

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patented and leased only to gentlemen.

And the men—the native officers, and the grim, black-bearded, swaggering rank and file—are the lean-ribbed, lineal descendants of fighting men from another part of India, where it is thought an honor, and not a disgrace, to salute a better fighting man—because respect begets respect.

The horses—and there are no such horses in any other army in the world—could run rings round anything on legs. The defaulter sheets were curiosities—about as necessary as a Christian chaplain; Mohammedan sons of landed gentry who are voluntary soldiers do not get into clink. The Regiment was clean five ways, and ready, and aware of it.

BUT it stood in tented lines and swore and sweated, and its language was infinitely more abominable than that of the army which once swore in Flanders. The men's tongue, made for swearing and enriched with military terms, could evolve profanity beyond the ken of even steam shovel drivers or Billingsgate fish porters; and it worked both watches under.

The Mess did its best, and led the blasphemy in clean clipped English—all, that is to say, but Colonel Stapleton. He swore only in action and then seldom.

Nobody swore at the police because they, of course, are beyond the pale or reach of anything the human mouth can compass. The Mess was civil to the District Superintendent, and avoided all reference to his trade—they would not have dreamed of calling it profession—they were sorry for him and, when he looked in on them every third day or so they made him drunk. But they could have done the same thing to the Devil or a Russian, had he turned up.

The Colonel would ask him once and only once, in just so many words, "Situation beyond you yet?"

He would answer: "No. Not yet, sir."

Then the listening Mess would sigh in unison and talk volubly of other things.

DAY after steamy, sweltering day they exercised their horses, ate the awful chicken of the country and the more than awful goat, and wished all the luck there is to the dacoits. The only thing that cheered them was the intermittent news of fresh atrocities—of a village sacked, of some one crucified on an anthill near a crossroads, of a baboo held to ransom, or of a policeman who had been too active in the hunt, captured and cut to pieces and left in baskets at the police camp entrance. Then there would be a thrill of pleasure through the lines. Some trooper would take his saber to the squadron swordsmith to have imaginary dints smoothed out, and the officers would look to revolver mechanisms.

But the upshot was invariably the same; the police (with three European officers to a district of eight hundred square miles) still thought that they could handle the dacoits without the military, and the Tail-Twisters ate their heads off still—hot, scornful and impatient.

Gopi Lall was out and on the rampage. Gopi Lall was a sportsman, according to his lights, and a man of acumen. Gopi Lall could have given the Tail-Twisters a ride and a fight that would have satisfied even them. There was a price on his head; there had been a dozen murders proved against him personally and half a hundred against his followers. He had looted, burned, blackmailed and run away until the District writhed; so he was fair, clean quarry.

The Tail-Twisters would have cheerfully surrendered the blood money to the police, and five times that much in addition, subscribed among themselves, for a two day chance at him. But the horses pawed along their lines in vain, and Gopi Lall continued to bribe the native police with one hand, terrify them with the other, and feather his undiscoverable nest among the jungle-clad hills with other people's property.

The police officers still proclaimed their faith in their men's integrity and skill, the Governor of a Province held his hand, the native press grew daily more volubly indignant, and Gopi Lall laughed at all of them until the clean, sunlit barracks back at Balibhum seemed after all like paradise that had been left behind. The Tail-Twisters had been glad to come away but they were soldiers; they objected to being merely "a measure of precaution," and they would have been overjoyed now to get their marching orders back again.

"THE trouble is, you see," said Colonel Stapleton, when the cloth in the stuffy Mess tent had been withdrawn from the trestle table and the

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Madeira was going round the same way as the sun, "that policemen—police officers, I mean—are forced to handle men who know everything that's crooked. They deal with crooks—I mean the men do, not the officers—and they become crooked. That reacts on the officers again. It doesn't make them crooks, for thank God a gentleman remains a gentleman under any circumstances. But it makes them in the end ignore things that they shouldn't overlook. It blunts their finer feelings."

He looked round the table, not for approval—for the Colonel of a Regiment says what seems good to him and that again is law—but for attention. He had it. The eight who sat with him were men who, each in turn, was almost worshiped by a native officer and a hundred stiff-chinned soldiers, who wasted no worship or respect on anything else less manly than themselves. But when Colonel Stapleton laid down the law, the eight would listen as shaven friars to their abbot.

"Now God forbid that we soldiers should become policemen! Let us remain soldiers before everything! The proudest boast that England has to her name is the raising of such regiments as this. Is there another nation that could call on native gentlemen, pay them nothing, or practically nothing, ask them to clothe and horse and feed themselves, form them into regiments, swear them in for three years and keep them for thirty, discipline them, let them officer their own troops, but put our own officers over theirs; and in spite of a difference in religion, language, customs and point of view produce such regiments? No, gentlemen! England stands alone in that particular, and long may she stand alone!"

"I wish he wouldn't preach!" whispered young Boileau—he who won the Guzerat pig sticking cup the season before, and took everything for granted except money. He mostly had to borrow that.

"They should pick native gentlemen to be policemen too," continued the Colonel. "Failing that, in a case of this kind they ought to make use of us promptly. As for being conversant with the despicable details, why the very fact that we know nothing of them is in our favor! Dirt and the ruts it lies in should be handled at the lance point. The police hunt rats like ferrets; they go in after them and defile themselves. Rats should be smoked out into the open and then killed off. The Government of this country is making a terrible mistake."

"Wish to the deuce the Government 'ud muzzle him!" whispered Boileau, and Stapleton caught what he said.

"Captain Boileau—stand up, sir!"

Boileau flushed and did as he was told. The Madeira had scarcely more than started on its rounds; they had toasted the Queen perhaps ten minutes before, so the glass in front of him was not more than his second. Hence the flush was due to either shame or irritation.

"I overheard your remark, sir. I prefer to believe that it did not refer to me. Let me remind you, though, that there are no circumstances under which a soldier can not remain a gentleman—no conceivable circumstance, sir. A gentleman is deferential to his seniors. A gentleman is courteous and polite. A gentleman does not make irreverent and irrelevant remarks in undertones at a time when his senior is speaking. Sit down, sir; but remember that your calling is the highest, without exception, that there is, and that there is no excuse—not even momentary forgetfulness—for diverging from that rule."

He suppressed his impatience with an effort.

"AS I WAS saying, gentlemen, I name no names, but the Government is making a mistake. The police serves a certain purpose and is a necessary evil. But when dacoity breaks out it is a serious error of judgment to employ any but gentlemen to extinguish it. To set a thief to catch a thief is wrong. To round up thieves one needs men who are incorruptible and who will stoop to nothing that is beneath a soldier's dignity. I have said as much in my letter to his Excellency; I put it strongly, and there may be results. The dawn may see the beginning of the end of Gopi Lall."

He had hardly finished speaking—he had barely more than waved away the decanter that was passed to him—when he and the rest of them sat bolt upright and listened hard.

"Oh, only a policeman," ventured Boileau.

But policemen do not ride as a general rule as this man rode. They could hear him some distance off but his horse seemed scarcely to touch the ground, and he was coming like an arrow.

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"Shod horse!" said Colonel Stapleton.

"Ah! There's the challenge."

"Yes, and barely a pause. He's coming on—at a trot now. No, he's galloping again. Despatches, by the Great Lord Harry!"

"It's our own man," swore Colonel Stapleton. "It's Dost Mohammed."

"Can't be, sir. He only left us the day before yesterday at noon."

"It's Dost Mohammed. A trooper would draw rein. It's Dost Mohammed with good news; else why in a hurry?"

"You're right, sir, it is."

There was a sound outside as of a cataclysm brought to sudden sparking halt. A saber clattered, a pair of loose-roweled spurs jangled, and a deep voice growled. Then suddenly, framed against the outer darkness, Dost Mohammed stood in the tent door and saluted.

"*Rung Ho, Bahadur!*"

They made room for him, to let him sit beside the Colonel. British and native officers neither eat together nor discuss their women; but in all save creed and caste they are blood brothers, whose Regiment is father, mother, honor and religion to them all. Dost Mohammed was a man of men—a born soldier, proved out, and more than welcome. But he stood first before the Colonel, holding out a letter.

"I bring good news, *Huzoor!*"

The Colonel seized what he brought and tore it open.

"Gentlemen!" he said. "It is as I told you. His Excellency has seen reason. He has ordered us to move at once to put an end to the dacoity. We will start after Gopi Lall at dawn."

CHAPTER II

A GENTLEMAN DOES HIS DUTY

Find ye the woman! Trail her down
By matched intrigue—by counter plan—
By hound—through spies—in field or town—
Find her! Then find the man!

CRIME, of course, is geographical. So is virtue. And Yasmini was a heroine. Heaven—who gave her eyes unfathomable—knows too the unfathomable secret of her name and origin; for she was not of Bengal nor of Madras. She was of India, and all India knew of her, though none knew whence she came.

Some said she was a high caste woman; others that a Maharaja once had brought her from the Hills, to be a plaything in the deathwatched depths of his zenana. That story added that the Maharaja died. And all who knew her, or knew of her, said that her little slender wrists could force a dagger home as artfully as her little jeweled ankles danced, or as her eyes could lure; and they sang songs about her eyes from Peshawur to Cape Cormorin. She herself sang some of them, and they were not at all moral songs, as morals are expounded in the West.

Art was the essence of her. She was suppleness and subtlety and studied grace in every attitude and word. And she was not married; for marriage, in the East at all events, would have been the sepulcher of artistry like hers. None knew whence her money or her jewels came, and none dared ask—just as none dared question her prerogative of dwelling in the Panch Mahal or her right to call it by that name. She could even change a language. She did exactly as she chose, and what she chose was mostly unexpected.

India, which of all the countries of the world alone could produce a Yasmini, alone has other wonders to unfold—old cities, undismantled, uncrumbled, uninhabited, and unexplained; cities in whose streets the jungle fights for room between the ton piece granite curbstones and the lords of the jungle make their lairs in latticed palaces.

There had been such a city once, close to Rajahbatkhowa, and a hundred thousand men all armed with axes might have cleared it still to shine in the jungle coaxing sun. But only one piece of it stood in the open—carved and painted, cupolaed and domed; a wonder building round a courtyard where fountain used to play in long forgotten ages; and there lived Yasmini. She called the place the Panch Mahal; and that, in a language of the cleaner, braver North, means "the playground of the ladies."

THE North-born troopers under Colonel Stapleton's command knew well the meaning of the words; and they knew to a big, thigh-booted gentleman the road that led through twisted jungle to the building she had named. Through the long hot afternoons there were often ten or twenty of them chatting in the latticed windows on the upper floor, or testing their

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soldier wits against the readier, trained repartee of Yasmini's handmaidens. She herself paid little heed to them, and less respect; she condescended only to sufficient courtesy to keep them coming there, and made her women keep them well supplied with cigarettes and strange, wonder-scented brands of sherbet.

But every now and then a native officer would swagger, spur jingling and saber clanking, underneath the arch to call on her; and then there would be a fluttering in the nest above, and Yasmini herself would come almost but not quite as Cleopatra came to Antony. She would stand at the stair head auraed in some pale blue muslin stuff, and she would greet him as the dawn greets night. Like night, his strength and resolution and conceit would vanish. But Cleopatra was in love with Antony.

Yasmini would dance for him, talk to him, bring him sherbet with her own amazing hands and sing a song or two that punned and played subtly round his warriorhood, her womanhood, and paradise where both might sit enthroned. Then while the troopers drew away into the corners in envious obedience, the officer would whisper to her things he should not have whispered, in return for promises that she did not intend to keep.

When evening came—for those were evenings of the eve of martial law, and darkness had to find the Regiment prepared—she would send him off, flattered and fooled; fierce-bearded, as empty of secrets as an egg the crows have found, to chew the bitter cud of recollection until memory of her overcame remorse, and his servant polished up his spurs for him and he threw discretion to the winds and came again.

Always the troopers came and were entertained and given sherbet. Now and then the native officers would jingle in, and be shown a glimpse of what Allah has provided for the truly brave and good in paradise. And daily, sometimes hourly, Gopi Lall, up in his fastness in the hills, received news of the Regiment's intentions, and was told how long yet he might dare to loose his following, red-handed, on the countryside.

The tastes and the inclinations of Yasmini would be as difficult to follow as the movements of her twinkling feet. Her eyes were laughing pools of mystery; her tongue an instrument of subtly woven, smothered, underhand intrigue; and her beauty could, and did, procure for her the abject slavery of any man on whom she had designs. She could pick the wearer of her favors from among the best spurred and booted bloods of India. Yet——

GOPI LALL was a Bengali, while she was from the North, where they despise his nationality and creed and speech and habits as a hadji hates a giaour. And at that, he was a Bengal outcast. His one sound eye was baleful, lit by greed and overhung by a lid devoid of lashes. His lips were slit and scarred where once a knife that he carried in his mouth had been hammered inward by an intended victim's fist. His hair—for he did not shave his head—was a shock of black, bewildering beastliness, uncombed, unoiled, unwashed. And his creed was the worst of him:

"I am the enemy of all the gods—of virtue, pity, charity, faith, mercy, love. I am the friend of fear and hate and hell. I have no human friends; who are not my servants are my enemies."

She had drifted with her entourage of waiting-women from a hatchery of treason on the outer wall of Delhi to her present strange abiding place, and Gopi Lall had sent her soon afterward one love missive—through the window. It was gory, and the blood was barely dried. Its eyes, wide opened, had been forced into a squint when dead, or during death from torture; and the lips had been attended to as only a dacoit's imagination could direct. It was not easy to recognize the once alluring face of Yasmini's particular pet handmaiden; but then Yasmini, too, had imagination beyond the ordinary. She buried the mistreated head and sent no word of it to the police.

Her answer had been unexpected, as nearly all that she directed was. She sent another maid, an innocent, sweet featured girl who had not seen the horror tossed in through the window; she sent her with a note to wait where Gopi Lall's men were known to pass occasionally. The note read:

Here is another. And if my lord would deign to visit me there are more than a dozen who are at his service.

The second girl had come back, well frightened, but alive, and with an answer. It was not in writing, nor on paper; but Gopi Lall's thumb mark done in blood on a

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piece of calico was a known passport on that countryside. It meant leave to live, and it was never violated while its holder had it; should he relinquish it through fear or at the feel of torture too devilish to name, that would entail no breach of faith by Gopi Lall. He had been known to keep one of his thumb print licensees alive for fourteen days, and then to let him go because the suffering wretch swallowed what he would not willingly surrender.

While she had that piece of calico, then, Yasmini was free to dwell in what she called her Panch Mahal, and she used her freedom to send messages by devious routes and unsuspected hands to the butcher who had thinned down her establishment. But Gopi Lall never came to her himself.

UP IN some hell-stained aerie, Heaven knew where among the hills, he ruled a thousand outlaws. Perhaps a dozen of them, more or less, knew Gopi Lall. They were his Generals of rapine, who handed down his orders to the rest. Each of his Generals held in hand a horde of other ruffians who, oftener than not, were peaceful countrymen, to all appearance living decent lives in unsuspecting villages, befriended by their victims' relatives, and known to the police and to the courts as honest men.

When one of these paid a chance visit to the house of Yasmini and sold a cord of wood perhaps, or brought trapped wild fowl or a bunch of jungle flowers as his tribute to her beauty, there was neither suspicion nor excuse for it. It was nothing but the ordinary, decent, humble way of rustic simpletons, who—as their betters did less innocently—might surely worship at the shrine of loveliness.

But, through channels undiscoverable, Gopi Lall became aware of all the news and of every move that the police might contemplate against him; and he knew, too, that the soldiers were still doomed to inactivity. And all the clue there was as to who might be in league with him was that certain villagers grew strangely rich—for villagers. That and one other thing.

Yasmini—bejeweled and beguiling, very much besought, ever coaxing information from strong men self-trained in secrecy, and giving neither explanation for her presence in fever-fouled Bengal nor rewarding any man with more than smiles and promises—watched daily for a man who did not come and talked long and often with the villagers who drifted in to pay her their respects, or sell something or bring her flowers.

Soon a rumor grew that she loved this one-eyed monster of the hills. Soon it became common knowledge that she loved him. The story spread and grew by spreading, until even Europeans heard of it. Some said that she had loved him in another part of India, had seen him once in passing and had lost her heart to him; that she had followed, and had placed herself deliberately where he could come and seize her and carry her away.

Others said that she had only heard of him, and that, tigress-like, she had loved at a distance a fabled, visionary Gopi Lall, described to her as an outlaw, but the flower of chivalry. These swore that, had she seen him, she would have recoiled in horror from the thought of being wooed or won by such a bloody, revolting brute.

AND there was Colonel Stapleton. He was the last to hear the rumors, and he let his officers believe whatever ribald impropriety they chose. He, first among soldiers, and soldier among gentlemen, believed the version that was mildest, and diluted even that with gallantry. To him it was unthinkable that any woman could love or let herself be loved by the real Gopi Lall. Therefore she had heard false stories of him. Therefore—it followed as the night the day—it was his duty to do something in the matter.

Her propriety or lack of it; her right to claim the treatment accordable to women of less questionable standing; her creed, if she had any; her caste, color, history, or hopes were nothing to him. She was a woman, he a gentleman. The rest was obvious.

To send for her would be impossible, even had he more than rumor for his reason; for in India even ladies such as Yasmini observe sufficient of the *purdah* law to preclude visits to a European officer. And, should he send a native officer alone, he doubted that his message would reach her worded and delivered just as he intended—gallantly, without a hint of impropriety or interference.

He decided, after quite a lot of thought, to go himself, accompanied by a native officer. And since Dost Mohammed was

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the man of all his eight commissioned charges whom he trusted most, the Colonel took him—weary after his two-day ride, but unreluctant.

"You see, Dost Mohammed," he explained, "we leave at dawn. This is the apparent duty of gentlemen. We don't know how much harm this Gopi Lall may do before we round him up, so we'll warn her now—you and I together—before it's too late."

"As you say, *Huzoor*," growled Dost Mohammed. And because of that ban on discussing women folk he saw fit not to tell his Colonel certain things he might have told. It was little that Dost Mohammed knew, except some fragmentary history; but even that much might have saved the trip.

SO DOST MOHAMMED rode beside him to the gilded dwelling on the jungle edge, and waited in the courtyard listening to the murmurings and gigglings above, and watching the shifting lights and shadows passing. And after an interminable wait Yasmini herself came down, close-veiled as if all the virtues of the East and West alike were concentrated in her loveliness.

Speaking in Hindustani, the *lingua franca* of India, Colonel Stapleton told her what he had to say of Gopi Lall, and of the rumor that she loved him. Yasmini thanked him, bowing low as a woodland fairy might have bowed to Oberon. With a little titter of embarrassment she disclaimed all knowledge of and certainly all love for the outlaw. She professed profound horror of him, and the pious hope that such a monster among men might meet a quick-found, slow-drawn Nemesis.

She satisfied the Colonel; but when he and his fierce coadjutor had ridden off—almost before the hoofbeats had died down in the steamy night mist—Yasmini laughed long and merrily; laughed with the tinkling cadence of a peal of fairy bells; lay on a cushioned divan and laughed; laughed as her maidens undressed her; and later, laughed herself to sleep.

"Are all men fools?" she laughed. "Nay. Find me another word! Princes, and priests and statesmen—they are fools. But soldiers, Englishmen—oh, women, soothe me; rub my ribs; pray Hanuman, the monkey god, to find a word for them!"

CHAPTER III

THE OLD MAN LANDS ON BOILEAU

Youth—and a woman!
The youth left solitary in a place
Where comrades lately laughed; feeling the bite
Of earned opprobrium, and face to face
With self—and sorrow—and an Indian night—
And debts—and drudgery—and prickly heat—
Youth, with a grown man's soldierly desire
For action! Warn him—cajole him—entreat—
Advise him! But he'll find the fire
That's lit by woman!

GOPI LALL, like other bandits of less visionary latitudes, had a half developed, half mocking notion of his own almost divinity. And, as greater men have done before him, he left his own country with neither following nor prospects, and came back to it an uncrowned king. The price put on his head by another Province had wrought the change for him.

He was certainly a humorist, in his own grim way. Three thousand rupees—at which a smarting and indignant Government valued him—was a fortune in itself; and, when he came back with policemen on his trail to his own Bengal, he was penniless. So he decapitated the first tax paying villager he could find whose size and general ugliness were something like his own, doctored the head with a knife, removed one eye, dried out the socket, and sent the resulting horror in a basket to police headquarters by the hand of a trusted lieutenant. He also sent a dozen witnesses to identify the thing and lay low himself until the blood reward was paid.

Of course feud followed, for the lieutenant claimed one-third of the money, and the witnesses all clamored for their share as well. As the logical result all thirteen men lay pegged out one afternoon on anthills, and to cap his quaint conceit Gopi Lall sent their heads to the police, with an accompanying homily, laboriously written out in blood. It was typically babooese, and it ended with a moral such as Æsop might have penned, but the concentrated gist of it was, "Such should be the end of all dishonest men!"

So the Government, which has no sense of humor, loved him, and did its ceaseless best to capture him, that it might hug him properly—with a slip knot and a hempen rope. And since Bengal breeds Bengalis, as well as snakes and jungle fever and the

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Indian Penal Code, Gopi Lall had ample opportunity to exercise his wit. If any knew where his hill-and-jungle-hidden aerie was, none dared tell of it; and, as for the native press, it used him as political ammunition, treating him one day as a national hero in revolt against bureaucracy, and the next as proof of crass incompetence on everybody's part.

The police, of course, used him as a scapegoat, and gave him warning of their moves whenever their three English officers were indiscreet enough to drop a hint.

They robbed right and left, and gave Gopi Lall the credit for it. But credit was not passed on and taken at its mere face value. When a robbery occurred that he had had no hand in, his share of it had to be left in some hiding place where he knew where to look for it, or else a dead policeman would be found within a day or two, staring up at the sun without his eyelids. He was not afraid of the police, and he was at much pains to make the fact apparent.

BUT the Tail-Twisters were another matter altogether. The man who can buy, blackmail, coax away, or steal the honor of a Rajput gentleman who wears a regimental crest could bribe high Heaven; and that Regiment, pawing and perspiring in its tented lines, was something that made Gopi Lall afraid. He took no liberties with it, and sent no greased night creepers to steal the horse feed and accouterments. Nor did he waylay the troopers who swaggered now and then along the jungle paths.

But he worked hard and quickly in an opposite direction. He made a levy on the villages to the north of him that exceeded all of his previous exactions, and with the money thus extorted he bribed the native press of eight cities to declaim against the Government for ordering out troops. For that once, the police became national heroes, or very nearly so, and even the Governor in person was denounced as an iconoclast for contemplating such a thing as the supersession of the "honorable constabeels."

Lithographed one-thousand-copy circulations hummed with indignation at the thought of turning loose a thousand "predatory horsemen" on the suffering countryside. So the Government of India, which always listens for a while before it acts and then smites hard and fast, kept the "brutal and licentious soldiery" in camp.

And Yasmini sang songs to her guitar, and danced, and melted strong men's hearts. And Colonel Stapleton wrote letters. And young Boileau—"Bandobust Boileau," who could lead a squadron like a gray wolf on a breast high scent, but who could not hold his tongue—talked just a little bit too loudly in his tent of "old women in the Service nowadays," and of "Don Quixotes who should be at home in padded cells."

So at dawn one morning when the Tail-Twisters swooped like a jingling whirlwind out of camp to round up Gopi Lall, in a tent that thrummed already with the morning heat sat Boileau, with a pile of documents in front of him that would keep him busy for a dozen days—him and the baboo. When the Colonel of a regiment does need to tame the rising flood of youthful insolence, there are always plenty of blue indent forms, and payment vouchers that need auditing, and other things even less interesting to the military type of wit.

He sat and watched the dust go up above the Regiment; saw the glittering lance heads rise, and dip, and vanish; heard the thunder of the hoofs die down; and then faced the task in front of him. He realized that the fault was his, and that the more quickly the red-tape-tied routine was waded through, the sooner he would lead his men again; but he felt like a schoolboy kept in after hours, with the sting of temporary ostracism added to the drudgery.

"Must admit the old man landed on me where I'd feel it," he told himself. "Did it neatly, too. 'Captain Boileau, I have to leave one officer behind to attend to details. I've selected you.' Cuss him! Left me to think out the reason for myself, and —blast his stateliness!—let the men think what they liked, too!"

A man, whose job, and honor, and promotion all depend on making sons of the sons of soldiers regard him as a demigod is vulnerable where he keeps his pride.

HE TOILED at the maddening "returns in triplicate" until the flies drove him from the tent. In spite of the netting and the squeaky improvised punkah, even the ink pot was full of flies, and even the baboo gave up regarding them as essential elements like air and earth.

He went to the gloomy, empty Mess tent,

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where a solitary servitor provided him with curried goat and flies.

There were more flies in his whisky peg and in the butter, and even the boy he sent for to stand behind his chair failed to keep the still uncooked ones from promenading on his cheek.

So he went back to the office tent again and tried to drown his consciousness of the hot, pestilential loneliness in hard work.

But the official office working hours in salubrious Bengal are limited, and the Bengali baboo, who has his uses, is a man who also knows his rights.

The clerk had gone without his noonday two-hour snooze in deference to Boileau's wishes, but, as he expressed it, he was "theoreticallee antagonistic, sir, to policy of working overtime without increased emolument."

So Boileau cursed him thoroughly and let him go at three o'clock. He did not see the force of borrowing money, at sixty odd per cent., from the baboo's relatives to spend even fractions of it on the baboo.

For the next few hours he sat and swore and read the three-weeks-old Home newspapers alternately. Then he went out and looked his horses over. Then the thought of dinner all alone again, with mosquitos this time instead of flies, swept over him, and for a while nostalgia had him in its depressing maw. And after that, of course, the particular red devil who sits on tree tops all over India and beckons to the lonely European drew nearer and held converse with him.

Youth called, and the fire of youth that leads the Anglo-Saxon into mischief. Mischief he must have, or see, or do within an hour or two, or else weep; and no soldier has any hankering for tears. Besides, for what is mischief, unless for the amusement of men of stamina?

"WHO is this Yasmini?" he asked of the first native he could find.

The man waxed interminably eloquent, after the eloquence which belongs to the East alone.

"What language does she speak?"

"All languages; the language of love, sahib, is a common tongue."

"Does she make love in English?"

"Nay, sahib. Who could? Neither does she make love, ever. The gods, who made her, made that unnecessary. When she lacks love, men bring it to her."

"She sounds amusing."

"Sahib—she is Yasmini."

"Um-m-m! D'you think she would receive me?"

"Who knows, sahib?" responded the native. "He who can tell the color of an unborn infant's eyes might know perhaps what Yasmini will do. There be dead men, sahib, who might tell, too, what good they had from her—none other!"

"Then, babooji, you wouldn't care to call on her, eh?"

"Sahib, have you seen a serpent hypnotize a bird? Would you be that bird? Have you watched a moth that fluttered round a lamp, and envied him?"

"I've seen the moths at it, baboo. But how about the notion of skating over thin ice?"

"Yasmini and ice, sahib, are as different as Kinchinjunga from the Plains."

"Which is the nearest way to where she lives? You've got me interested, babooji. I'll call on the lady."

"Nay, God forbid, sahib! I have warned you. I will not direct you to your undoing! There are women on the countryside in hundreds who——"

"*Chup!*" commanded Boileau. So the baboo held his tongue.

But fifteen minutes later Boileau's servant came to him, carrying his Panama to replace the helmet that in that climate in the daytime a man must wear even inside his tent.

"D'you know the way to Yasmini's?" he asked.

And the wicked, wrinkled old Abdullah grinned.

"I'll not bother about dinner. As soon as it's dark bring a lamp and lead me to her."

"Will the sahib dress?" he asked deferentially.

"Um-m-m-n-yes. She's a—ah—a—er—she's what we white men call a lady, isn't she?"

"Sahib, she is Yasmini. There is no woman like her in the world!"

"Yes, I'll dress as though for dinner. And—ah—Abdullah——"

"Sahib?"

"Hold your tongue!"

Abdullah grinned again.

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CHAPTER IV

A VILLAGER EARNS HIS SALT

There's Bengal Horse behind you, man, a crisscross
trail ahead;
One plan to make;
Ten paths to take;
One slip—one fault—you're dead!
There's hue and cry, and clank of sword; hark! hear
the trumpet call!
The pennants dance
On hungry lance!
Think quickly, Gopi Lall!

COLONEL STAPLETON was not a man to inveigh against policemen and then adopt their tactics or avail himself of their assistance. Nor had he risen to the rank of Colonel in a regiment that admitted no superior on earth without being a soldier in every courtly inch of him. The Stapleton of drawing rooms and mess tables—if the truth were known, of somewhat prosy platitudes, and rather too fastidious ideas—was another person than the man who led the Tail-Twisters when their lances rippled in the open, and their chargers strained behind him and the trumpeter.

He was still courtly. A lone woman would have picked him still of all his Regiment as the right man to apply to for protection. But a general of division, too, would have picked him to lead a rally, or a quick-sent charge to turn the tide of battle in a crisis—him and his Regiment.

He led his Regiment now—at an easy canter to take full advantage of the morning cool—straight toward the hazy line of hills where Gopi Lall was currently supposed to have his lair. The District Superintendent of Police, warned of the change in the direction of affairs too late to interfere, wore out an Arab pony in pursuit of him, and brought him to a momentary halt within a mile of the ragged foothills.

"I UNDERSTAND, sir, that you have been placed in charge of things," he panted, wiping off the perspiration.

"Yes sir. You have not been misinformed."

"Then don't you want the police to cooperate?"

"No, sir."

"But——"

"I prefer to act independently. I won't deprive you or your policemen of any credit that may accrue to you. If I interfered with your plans, or availed myself of your men, it might be said afterward, if your men captured him, that my Regiment had done the work."

He started to ride on.

"But, Colonel Stapleton——"

"Well, sir?"

"You won't be able to ride right up to him like that! Why, he's certain to have had notice of your start already; this country's honeycombed with spies. He'll be miles away by the time you get to where he may have been last night."

"At least I'll find his buzzard's roost," said Colonel Stapleton, "and make it a bit too hot to hold him for some time to come! I suppose you know where his headquarters are?"

"Nobody seems to know exactly. I know about within ten miles."

"I'm going to know exactly, and within two hours. If he bolts, look out for him—and if you catch him, you do it to your own advantage. I'll set him moving, and keep him on the run, but no man of my Regiment will claim the reward unless one of my men bags him."

"Will you wait one hour, sir, while I ride back and telegraph? He'll bolt toward the north, I'm sure of it. He's probably on his way now. I'd like to get a cordon of my men in place to intercept him."

"D'you mean to tell me that you haven't had a cordon drawn these three weeks past?"

"Yes, but I'd like to warn the men."

"Through a—ah—baboo telegraphist?"

"How else?"

The Colonel smiled at him.

"I'll wait for no one, sir. Good morning!"

BEFORE the sun was two hours up the Tail-Twisters were in among the foothills, split up troop by troop, and scouring every trail that led toward the center of the hills. And a half troop under Dost Mohammed was busily rounding up outraged, expostulating villagers. They tried on him the tactics that for months past had foiled or fooled or suited the police. But he found a way to change their attitude; lances and sabers, fierce eyes and upbrushed beards and blunt directness, warhorse-carried, did what the police had

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failed in signally. Soon Dost Mohammed rode with a prisoner up behind him who knew Gopi Lall's nest and the road to it, and dared not refuse to show the way.

What threats the grim Mohammedan growled to him as they rode were never entered in the Regimental history; but they seemed to be fierce enough, and backed with enough reality nearly to scare the soul out of the wretch. For, as they rode nearer, in an ever narrowing arc of troops, to where a ring of trees stood on a dome-shaped hill, the prisoner showed signs of fright such as it is not exactly good to watch.

Time and again he begged to be left behind. Over and over he swore that from now on the road was straight and easy. But to his prayers and oaths the native officer answered nothing that any save the prisoner could hear. Had the Colonel heard, he might have felt disposed to deny the statement, given on the honor of a soldier, that he, Stapleton, was infinitely worse, more cruel, more ingenious, and less amenable to reason than the bloodsome Gopi Lall himself!

After a while, though, even that inducement lost its spur. The prisoner argued that he knew from grim experience what Gopi Lall was capable of doing, whereas the Colonel's tendencies were hearsay. He threw himself down from Dost Mohammed's horse and lay where he fell, shuddering on the ground. He would not rise, even when they urged him with a lance butt. He swore that he preferred death there to the chance of what might happen should Gopi Lall see who had led his enemies.

So, lest Gopi Lall recognize him, they tore two eye-holes in his loin cloth and wrapped that round his head, and put him on the horse again, and started on.

"The Government will pay me for my cloth?" he wailed.

"Hold, Colonel sahib!" called the native officer. "This black fellow of the foothills is playing with us!"

"What makes you think that?"

"He is not so frightened as he seems."

They formed a ring round the trembling prisoner; he was trembling now in earnest.

"I will more than terrify him, Colonel sahib, if I may."

"No, Dost Mohammed!"

"*Huzoor*, we——"

"We are not policemen, even if we are doing policeman's work! I'll have no dog's tricks here."

At the word "dog's tricks" the soldier glowered, for it was hovering dangerously near an insult; Mohammedans and dogs are not associable, even in metaphor.

"If he's not afraid, why is he shamming fear?"

"I know not, Colonel sahib. A dog might smell the reason."

The native officer had chosen the wrong moment to display resentment at imaginary insults, as he divined on the instant. If Colonel Stapleton was courtly and considerate on every possible occasion, he was a stickler, too, for deference to himself and fully capable of enforcing it. His eye alone, when he was roused, was quite enough to cow most ordinary men. The native officer changed his tune in a hurry, before the Colonel could have time to speak.

"It was but a soldier's joke, *Huzoor*. Let this man hunt, as a dog hunts, quartering the ground while the Regiment waits. I will soon see what he knows. If he wishes salt let him earn it."

That was a pun that either in English or the native language might have had several meanings; the Colonel ignored all of them. He was in a hurry to get on, and too impatient to read riddles.

"Ride on with him," he ordered. "You and ten men."

SO DOST MOHAMMED rode with him, feeling in his saddle bag to make quite certain that he had what he needed. He and his ten rode over a ridge, and down into the dip beyond; and then he called halt unexpectedly, and threw the prisoner to the ground.

"Bind him!" he ordered; and without a word, or even a look of astonishment, the troopers trussed him and cross trussed him with their hobble ropes. Then Dost Mohammed reached into his saddle bag again. He did not dismount himself.

"A pinch or two will serve," he ordered, passing a little package to the nearest trooper. Another trooper forced open the prisoner's jaws, and the first man took the package and poured something into the gaping mouth.

"Be careful lest he swallow it too quickly, and see that he spit out none!"

They squeezed the wretch's throat to

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prevent his swallowing, and one man stuck a finger on his tongue and rubbed the dose well over it.

"So! Now let him rise. Kick him up. So—now!"

He legged his horse up beside the prisoner, and watched him with blazing eyes.

"Thou hast thy salt. Now pay for it. Salt without water is payment for thy service in advance. There will be water when we reach the den of Gopi Lall."

The troopers mounted, and for two minutes sat in a half circle, watching the varying emotions play across their prisoner's face. Their own faces were immovable, like the masks of Fate. The prisoner looked at the trees above him, and the hills around, and at the ground between his feet. Then he began to swallow hard, and next his eyes fell on a little tinkling stream that ran winding fifty yards away. He made a dash to reach it, but a trooper spurred his horse, and a drawn saber flashed between him and the stream.

"There will be water—cool water—in the den of Gopi Lall!" said Dost Mohammed.

The man went on his knees, but no answer came from the troopers. They sat and waited for the quite inevitable. He threw his tied hands up in an attitude of piteous appeal; not daring to speak, for fear of getting more salt saliva down his throat. But the troopers waited.

"Lead us to Gopi Lall," said Dost Mohammed.

Another minute the prisoner sought for a way out. Then he surrendered. He came to Dost Mohammed's saddle bow, and waited to be lifted up, for he could not mount alone with his hands tied. A trooper reined in beside him and seized him under the arms and swung him up behind the officer. Then:

"Fours—right about! Trot! Canter!" ordered Dost Mohammed. Within fifteen minutes from the start they were back to where the Colonel waited.

But the punctured loin cloth was over the prisoner's head again, and nobody could see that the wretched man was undergoing torture.

"Why is he tied?" demanded Colonel Stapleton.

"He tried to escape, *Huzoor*."

"Oh. What did you discover?"

"He was acting fear, to throw us off the scent. To make us believe that we were nearing Gopi Lall's headquarters, he pretended that he was more and more afraid. He will now show us the true road. Shall I lead on, *Huzoor*?"

SO, EXTENDED to twenty horses' lengths apart, the Regiment wheeled and rode back at a canter ten miles along the road by which they came. Then, at a sign from the hooded prisoner—he gave it with his leg, for he could neither move his hands nor speak—Dost Mohammed wheeled and swung uphill suddenly along a track that was cleverly concealed by scrub. No trumpet sounded; but at a sign from Colonel Stapleton the troops split up, and snooped in different directions to surround the knoll above the jungle to which the track quite evidently led. And one troop and Colonel Stapleton himself followed Dost Mohammed and his ten.

The track wound and twisted almost on itself, through blind, black jungle; it was so narrow that for nearly all the way they had to ride in single file. Half way up Dost Mohammed rode into a string stretched above the path. A blunderbuss fixed in a near-by tree burst the same instant; and although it burst from overloading, scattering the slugs and nails harmlessly, the noise it made would have been enough to alarm the Seven Sleepers.

"Ride!" roared Colonel Stapleton from behind. "Crack on the pace, Dost Mohammed!"

But the native officer had spurred and settled down to ride in deadly earnest even before the instant order came. With a crash that set the jungle thundering as if a herd of elephants were stampeding through it, the troop whirled on until it reached a clearing—checked for an instant—swung out into line—and swept forward at a gallop.

"Halt!" roared Stapleton.

Before them was a fort, or something like one, made only of thin mud walls and rough stones here and there, but pierced for rifle firing. There was no flag above it, and no sign to show whether those who held it were outlaws or peaceful citizens. Only a babel from the interior proved that panic reigned inside. A minute later crash after crash resounded from eight different directions, and from four ways at once troop after troop, torn and bleeding from the jungle thorns, broke out into the open. The

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fort was surrounded, and retreat cut off.

"Order them to bring out Gopi Lall."

Dost Mohammed rode ahead, still with his prisoner up behind him, and engaged in an altercation at the gate. A moment later the gate swung open, and a weird procession came out sheepishly—fifteen men, a dozen women, two children, and a skewbald native pony, lame and saddle-galled.

"Line them up and look them over."

There were no weapons in the whole procession, and there surely was no Gopi Lall. Dost Mohammed dropped his prisoner and let him drink deep at a spring that bubbled from the ground before the gate.

"What made that man so thirsty?" asked the Colonel.

"Fear, *Huzoor*."

"Um-m-m!"

He stared very hard at Dost Mohammed for a minute, but the Rajput's eyes did not so much as quiver.

"Well—we're wasting time."

HE TOOK a troop himself, and searched the whole fort thoroughly. The troopers drove their lances or their saber points into every crack and cranny; they probed the stamped earth floor, and prodded in among the beams and around the eaves. But there was neither sign of Gopi Lall nor hidden loot.

The prisoners admitted readily enough that the fort was Gopi Lall's headquarters, and that he had slept there overnight; but more than that they would not say. Two among them were the bandit's captives, held for ransom; but, with truly Eastern logic, they were the least communicative. They had had trouble enough, and did not intend to risk the outlaw's vengeance by betraying anything they knew.

There was scarcely any evidence there worth preserving, and no clue whatever to Gopi Lall's present whereabouts. A few old blunderbusses and some native swords were found in corners, but they showed no signs of recent use. The soldiers carried these into the open and stacked them, and later made the prisoners carry them. But first the Colonel ordered fire set to the fort thatch.

"At least I'll spoil his rendezvous," he swore. "And if there's anything we didn't find there, he won't have the use of it."

When the flames had burst, and blazed, and were beginning to die down again, he called his troop commanders to him.

"Now separate," he ordered. "Divide the whole country into sections, and scour it thoroughly. Don't leave a single nook or cranny or hut or hiding place unsearched. And don't trust to the police cordon to the north. In other words, don't dally. Ride him down. The brute was here last night, so he can't have got far. Overtake him.

"And, in case he doubles back, or hides in the jungle, keep on scouring the country until you get him. Take any food you want and give vouchers for it; I'll cash the vouchers back at Rajabatkhowa. Send in reports to me there."

There was no place for the Colonel of a regiment then except headquarters, with the gleeful men split up in detachments and no possibility of centralized control. So, a little sadly, he took one half troop as an escort and for camp guard duty, rounded up his prisoners, and started back to where young Boileau was supposed to be concentrating all his powers on writing up the Regiment's "returns."

CHAPTER V

BOILEAU RUNS A RISK

Tales that were tenderly told,
Rumors of love for the bold—
Deadlier dangerous, friend of mine,
Jokes men made as they passed the wine,
Sent him to spy on Yasmini.

Sleepless, unslaked desire,
Memory's maddening fire,
Deadly resolve to spy again,
Madness of moths was all his gain—
That, and no more, from Yasmini.

THE fireflies danced like a myriad fairy lights; the jungle beside them whispered weird night sounds through the steaming dark, and their footfalls on the rotted leaves were like the creeping of conspirators, as Boileau and his servant took the ax-cleared, winding path that led to Yasmini's. The servant went ahead, swinging the lantern to betray the tree roots.

Boileau, a dozen yards behind, felt guilty; and the sense of guilt brought him a thrill he had not experienced since Aurang Zeb, his charger, ran away with him and brought up all standing on the railway line in front of the Bombay Mail Express. He knew too much of Indian caste and custom to expect to be received, even where the men of his own troop might lounge; but he vaguely

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guessed that Yasmini and Adventure and himself were all three mates that night.

Abdullah, grinning, set the lantern down on the courtyard tiles and went to scrabbling with his fingers on a narrow door. It was newer than the carved stone niche it fitted, and looked like one of Yasmini's precautions, for it was strongly reinforced with bars of iron and big, flat-headed nails. No more than one man could have entered through it at a time. Soon Abdullah started whispering, and Boileau—with a strange impatience in his veins, and a stranger sense of standing on the edge of everything—looked up and watched the shadows flitting by the window. There seemed to be excitement up above, if nothing else.

"What's happening, Abdullah?" he asked, after many minutes of hissed argument through a little hole that opened in the panel. The hole was not square; no lance could have been thrust through it, and its outer end was too small for an eye to look through it over a pistol barrel. It closed, like a bunghole, with a peg.

"Patience a little, sahib. She is considering."

"Is that the famous Yasmini beyond that hole?"

"Nay, sahib, but her maid. She went once and returned again, and now she is gone for the second time."

"What's all the trouble?"

"No trouble, sahib. Yasmini would know."

"Know what?"

"Whether she confers an honor or receives one."

"'Pon my soul, I'd give a month's income to know the same thing!" laughed Boileau to himself. And then the door opened grudgingly and Abdullah beckoned to him and bowed him through, and squatted on the step outside with the dog-like patience of the Indian native servant.

INSIDE were darkness, and the smell of musk—black darkness, made blacker yet by a curtain at the stair head. Some one whom he could not see replaced the peg in the peephole; and an unseen soft hand that trembled at his touch but did not draw away, took his.

"Lead on, McDuff!" said Boileau, throwing off his sense of helplessness, and kicking out to find the bottom step. But his dress spur caught in gauzy drapery and something ripped. He stood on one leg, and tried to free himself, but the wearer of the gauze pulled, too, to free it. He felt his balance going and kicked out again, and fell. A second later he was struggling on the ground with a giggling woman, laughing from sheer appreciation of the unforeseen, but expecting every second to feel a long knife in his ribs.

Then before he could regain his feet the curtain parted at the stair top and a radiance appeared in the middle of it—Yasmini herself. There was no doubt she must be Yasmini. He had thought of her as black, or dull olive color at the best. He saw an ivory and old-rose tinted damsel, who might or might not be twenty years of age. He had thought of black hair, drawn back in straight lined waves. He saw a mass of burnished copper-gold, that fell in curling cataracts from crown to knees. He had thought of thin, cruel lips, dyed blue perhaps, and even of a nose ring. What he saw were features that would be May-crowned in the West, and lips—red lips, uncarmined; lips that a shaven anchorite would have fought half the world to kiss.

She stood forward on the step and smiled down at him, framed in an aura of gold light between black curtains. He could see her feet, pale pink and ivory, encased in gilded slippers. Above them, some pale-blue filmy stuff encircled her as mist enfolds the morning, hinting at loveliness and making it far lovelier by concealment. He could neither speak nor laugh now, nor find his feet. He lay spellbound, looking upward at her, until his eyes met hers. And he had thought of almond eyes, brown or perhaps hazel!

No man that ever lived could tell the secret of the color of her eyes. Few dared look into them longer than to bear away a memory of smoldering loveliness—of molten jewels, lovelit under drooping lids. But Boileau was a man whose every breath of life was daring, and he stared—and stared—and forgot the power of speech.

Yasmini spoke first and what she said, in a velvet voice that sounded vaguely like the love call of a nightingale, was in a language Boileau did not understand. But the maid understood it and found her feet at once; and Boileau guessed. However purred, through lips however sweet, the tongues of the ancient East are apt at framing

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comment on such matters as a man and a maiden in the dark.

"What did she say?" asked Boileau, feeling the blushes rise from somewhere down his neck and race beneath his hair until his ears glowed crimson. But the girl only giggled and pushed him toward the stairs.

So up went Boileau, swaggering to get his self-possession back, letting his spurs clank handsomely and twirling at his waxed mustache. And Yasmini made way for him, bowing before him mockingly—half, he suspected, to let him realize her supple grace, and half because she really was amused. Eight maids—all dark-skinned contrasts to the queen of this strange jungle bower—attended her, and seemed to know her thoughts. They piled the cushions high on a long, low divan by the window, and motioned Boileau to it; and, feeling like an idiot, he sat on it, and sank deep down among the soft embroidery. It was impossible to sit; he sprawled, and felt more like an idiot than ever.

BUT Yasmini herself came over and sat near him on a pile of cushions, pushing out one slippered foot so that he could see the greenish veins under the transparent skin. And he began to forget his awkwardness in amazed contemplation of what the curtained East could lay bare when it chose.

A maid extinguished most of the lamps, and left only half a dozen hanging, jeweled lights that glowed mysteriously, multicolored, through faint blue sandal smoke. Two maids sat near her. One fanned her, for the heat was stifling; one watched. Another maid bent over the divan and wafted air at Boileau with a fan of peacock feathers. Yasmini, showing little even pearls of teeth, smiled like the soul of early morning, leaned on her elbow and began to talk.

She spoke now in Hindustani, which Boileau understood. For all its other qualities that is a language that can sound, and be, like honey on the lips of loveliness.

"What ails my lord?"

She purred it, as though it were an overture to love itself.

"Nothing ails me. I think I am singularly favored."

"You seem displeased. Is aught lacking?"

"Miss Yasmini, I think there is nothing lacking when you are at hand!"

He could not for the life of him bring himself to call her Yasmini without some prefix. It sounded ridiculous, but he, too, felt ridiculous—until he looked into her eyes again. Then he forgot himself and everything except her eyes.

"My lord is pleased to joke with me?"

"'Pon my soul!"

English was the only tongue that suited his dilemma. With her eyes on him, he could not think unless he thought aloud, and he had a foolish notion that if his thoughts were in English she might not understand.

"Does anybody ever joke with you?" he asked in Hindustani.

Her eyes changed—not in color, but as if the light behind them glowed a little more.

"Not often. One did—once. My lord has not yet deigned to tell the cause of the honor that he pays me."

That was a stumper. She waited for his answer as a suppliant waits, pillowed at his feet and looking up at him. There was not a hint of laughter in her eyes, nor the vaguest, least suggestion that she thought him an intruder or a boor, or anything except what he had thought himself an hour ago—a spurred and righteous lord of what he looked at.

"I had heard of you, that's all."

"And came to see me? Why? Why at this hour?"

"'Pon my soul, I——'

"To laugh at me?"

"On my honor, no!"

"To order me away?"

SHE looked at his spurs and at his military mess jacket; and if she were not afraid she gave a very good imitation of concern.

"I don't suppose there's a man living who would order you away from anywhere!"

"Then I have leave to stay on here?"

"So far as I can give it you have leave to stay here till the crack of doom. I'd hate to see you go. I want to see a lot more of you. I——"

He cursed the unresisting pillows that prevented him from sitting upright. No white man — least of all a soldier — can collect his wits and fence with words reclining in a nest of scented clouds. Besides, a

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soldier's garments are not made for it; he looks ridiculous.

"Then why at this hour, Heavenborn?"

The last thing that Boileau had expected was to be snubbed for breach of etiquette.

"It isn't so late as all that, is it?" he stammered awkwardly. He felt for his watch, but had none. He did not want to go, but for the life of him he could think of no excuse for staying. And Yasmini continued to look up at him like a little girl suppliant, awaiting explanations.

"Why—ah—" he twirled at his mustache and tried to seem at ease—"I was busy all day long and—ah—my native servant said——"

"What did he say?"

"Said that he knew the way here and that you might receive me—said he wasn't sure, but he thought you might."

"And is that your servant—he who sits below there at the door?"

There was a world of wonder in her voice, and she watched him now through eyelids almost closed; he could no longer see the pools of fire that glowed behind them.

"Yes."

"Then the way of the *sahib log* is to—ask questions of their—low caste servants—" she shuddered, but even that movement was all suppleness and grace—"and to follow their advice in matters pertaining to their visits?"

"Abdullah isn't a low caste man. He's——"

"No?"

Boileau remembered then that there are castes within castes, and that even Mohammedans are not without a caste law of their own, so he said nothing.

"And that man—that creature of the devil—said that I would receive you? No wonder that you came! Will the Heavenborn partake of sherbet?"

"No thanks," said Boileau. "I'm sorry you've gathered such a false impression. I—ah—wouldn't have offended you for worlds—ah—I'll take my leave now and—ah—call again, perhaps to-morrow, at a more reasonable hour. Didn't want to meet my own troopers here, you know," he added, as an afterthought, by way of mild retaliation.

"Have your troopers, too, said strange things of me?"

"Not to me, at all events. We—ah—don't discuss—ah—ladies."

YASMINI smiled, and he might take her smile to mean exactly what he chose. He rose, and she rose languidly, taking her maid's hand. She might have been smiling at his tight-kneed efforts to escape with dignity from the embracing divan. Whatever the cause of it, her smile bewildered him exactly as his first sight of her had done, and he could not find words as she bowed in front of him, with the same mock worship, and the same lithe grace, and led him to the stair.

He went down the stair feeling like an idiot—glad of the darkness—going sidewise to prevent his spurs from catching in the carpet; but in spite of it his spurs did catch and he fell down nearly to the bottom. And his feelings were still further tortured by the sound of peal on peal of tinkling, silvery laughter from the room above, that started immediately the maid opened the narrow door for him. A chorus of laughter from the maids was the last sound that he heard as the door slammed tight behind him.

HE WALKED back like a man in a stupor, stumbling once or twice in spite of Abdullah's care to hold the lamp over each protruding tree root. He could see Yasmini's eyes in the dark, but every time he tried to gaze at them they moved and when he tried to follow them they moved again.

"I've not been drinking," he muttered to himself. "It must be liver. Yes, it's liver. But ye gods and little fishes, what a woman!"

"Been trying to get cool, Boileau?" said a voice, as he passed down the lines to his own quarters, and he nearly jumped. It was only by a miracle that he recalled his nerve in time. He turned into the tent whence the voice came, and saw his Colonel sitting in a camp chair smoking.

"Didn't expect you back so soon, sir. Any luck with Gopi Lall?"

"No. Found his nest. Got him on the run, that's all. The troops are after him. Any cooler out in the jungle there?"

Boileau laughed. "I got a cool reception, sir," he answered. "I called on Yasmini."

"The very deuce you did! What's she like?"

"She's a wonder, sir. Couldn't describe her—no man living could."

"Beautiful?"

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"Have to find a new word, sir."

"Gave you a cool reception did she? I wonder she admitted you. Did you get the least idea as to why she's here?"

"None whatever."

"Is she—ah—I mean—what about her morals?"

"Judging by the way she treated me, sir, I'd say she was——"

"Well, what?"

"That she belies her reputation. She's a native, of course, and there's no means of judging them, any more than a man can tell how the stories about her started. But she's chaperoned more thoroughly than a seventeen year old débutante at home, and she's as dignified—for all her witchery—as the deuce himself."

"Um-m-m! I'd keep away if I were you. I'm not giving orders, but—well—it's good advice. If trouble came of it—she's a native woman, mind—you'd run the risk of being neither officer nor gentleman. A deuce of a nasty risk to run! Turning in? Good night."

CHAPTER VI

DOST MOHAMMED GOES ON A STILL HUNT

Who sees all that a robber sees—hears what a robber hears—
Learns the lore that a robber knows—
Treads where his trail to hiding goes—
Feels what a robber fears?
None save he who dons his garb, acts as the robber's mate—
Runs as the robber runs from men—
Begs of the other robbers—then
Risks, too, the robber's fate.

ALL that the Tail-Twisters, working troop by troop, unearthed was evidence of police complicity and supineness. They found misguided natives who mistook them for policemen, thinking that anything in uniform was some sort of a "constabeel," and from these they learnt surprising things; as, for instance, that the blood levy had been paid that month to Gopi Lall, and therefore the police would find themselves in trouble if they trespassed.

At first there would be disillusionment, for a trooper of the Bengal Horse is not exactly flattered by being likened to a civilian, and to a policeman least of all. The butt of a lance thrust with an oath of explanation at the erring rustic's stomach would bring acknowledgment of error. But once it was known that they were troops, and not police, the channels of information dried, so after a while they pretended to be a new brand of "constabeel" whenever the pretense was possible.

From time to time they came on villagers who offered them rupees; and he who has tried to tip a Bengal cavalryman for service rendered may have a good idea of what reception that met. They will loot, those fierce, black-bearded troopers, in time of war—none more readily or thoroughly; but gratuities, in money or in kind, are rather more to be withheld than verbal insult. Their pride is not of the made-for-show description.

Whether hunting through the tangled thickets where thatched huts were hidden in tiny clearings, or scouring on a chance-encountered trail from village to hill village, they found evidence in plenty of the outlaw's doings and of the terror he had established, but never a sign of Gopi Lall himself.

"Where is his woman?" demanded Dost Mohammed twenty times a day at least. And the answer was always the same—often in the same words:

"*Huzoor*, what woman dare refuse him?"

"Which woman loves him most?"

"None love him. All fear him!"

"Which, then, does he most love?"

"*Huzoor*, does a he wolf love the sambur? Does a tiger love the village buffalo?"

Then, "May Allah rip the vitals out of every Jungli in Bengal!" Dost Mohammed would swear, and spur his charger on to the next village.

Cross quartering the country they searched, as eagles search, minutely, for signs of any guard that might betray the whereabouts of the robber's hidden loot; but either he had trusted nobody to guard or else the men he trusted were too shrewd to show that they were watching.

They made prisoners who led them along half hidden trails to where the outlaw once had been; and once thus guided they discovered underneath a waterfall a secret cave, where possibly his loot had once been hidden. There was one rupee there, fallen in a crack between the rocks; a trooper forced it out with his saber point. But there was neither other loot than that one coin there, nor track of Gopi Lall.

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ONCE they fell in with a posse of police, who grinned at them and asked what they had done with the outlaw's head. That nearly brought about a fracas, and it was only the timely arrival of their English officers that stopped them from teaching the "constabeels" how a charger-and-Rajput-driven lance point feels. The police, under questioning from the officers, swore that Gopi Lall had left the country and would not return.

They began almost to believe that Gopi Lall had been a myth, and several officers became converts to the theory that he was in reality a syndicate of robbers, who had taken one collective name for the sake of mystery and convenience. Acting on that suggestion they began the search all over again, rounding up the inhabitants of every village and making the headmen give an account of each. But still there was no result worth mentioning. They succeeded in corroborating the fact of an actual, single, Gopi Lall's existence, but nothing more.

Then Dost Mohammed became possessed of an idea, and asked for leave to hunt alone.

"Why, Dost Mohammed?"

The senior Major lacked not a little of the Colonel's tact.

"For the reward?"

The Rajput flushed under his dark skin.

"Because thus I will hunt better, sahib."

The Major pulled out a copy of the printed proclamation from his saddle bag and looked it over.

"The reward is offered 'to any person or persons who procure or bring such information as shall lead to the arrest and conviction of the outlaw known as Gopi Lall.' That means, Dost Mohammed, that the first man to hand in the information gets the money."

Dost Mohammed sat his horse in silence, glaring.

"It says, too, at the bottom, 'in addition to the above named reward for information, a sum of rupees three thousand will be paid to whomsoever shall produce the head or body or both of the above named Gopi Lall.' That would be five thousand rupees all told —nothing much to divide among a Regiment, but a tidy little sum for any one man; what?"

"Since when, sahib, has an officer of this Regiment been subject to suspicion such as recruits for the Regulars merit?"

"You say you have a private clue. If you followed it and found the man you would be within your rights if you claimed the whole reward."

"I said nothing of a private clue, sahib, nor of a clue at all, nor of my rights. I said that I had an idea, and a good one, that I could best carry out alone. All the rights I claim are the right to be treated as a man of honor. As for the reward——"

He leaned slightly from the saddle and spat, with a gesture that was eloquent.

"Then if I let you go alone, you'll only claim one share in any case?"

"You had no need to ask, sahib. I will neither claim nor accept one copper pice of the reward!"

"I have to consider the Regiment, Dost Mohammed."

"And I, sahib, who have served her Majesty but twenty years as yet, thought naturally only of the money! Have I your leave to go?"

"Look here, Dost Mohammed, I had no intention of offering you an insult, and you know it. You've no right to take my remarks that way. You're hovering dangerously near a breach of discipline."

The native officer saluted and sat still.

"D'you understand that I was taking an ordinary elementary precaution on the other men's behalf?"

"I understand, sahib, that you misunderstood me."

"And you me. Very well then."

THE Mohammedan did not answer, but he did not have either the air of a man who had not understood his superior officer.

"You'd better tell me what this plan of yours is."

"Sahib, you would only laugh at me."

"I give you my word of honor I will not."

"Neither will you agree, sahib, if I tell you."

"You want me to take both you and your plan on trust, eh? Very well. I'll prove my faith in you. You have leave. Now, tell me."

"I will be Gopi Lall."

"You!"

"I, sahib."

"How—why—what the——?"

"Sahib, on this countryside there are dozens—there must be—who are his friends; who know which way he would run; probably who know which way he did run—who

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advised him or would advise him——"

"But, man alive! Dost Mohammed! You don't look in the least like Gopi Lall. You couldn't make yourself look like him even if you plucked one eye out."

"And, sahib, would Gopi Lall—with a hue and cry behind him—travel undisguised? His ugliness is a byword even where he is not known. Men know that he has but one eye and tangled hair that never knew the comb, and lips that are like sun-cracked pollution. Would he journey with his name and number on his face for all the world to see, as a trooper wears his crest?"

"But—what language does he speak?"

"From choice? Bengali."

"And you?"

"I speak it too, as well as he."

"It's a deuce of a risky sort of plan, Dost Mohammed!"

"The risk is mine, sahib."

"I hardly know what to say. You see, you're an officer; it seems hardly the proper work for a commissioned man. It 'ud hardly be creditable to the Regiment if you got knifed or shot or run through by one of our own men while disguised as a murdering thief."

"Will it be a credit to the Regiment, sahib, to go back to the lines without his head; to do no better than the rascally police; to have even the little children ask us where are the soldiers, since the Bengal Horse became constabeels?"

"Why not let a trooper try it?"

"Because I already have permission, sahib!"

"True. You hold me to my word? Very well. Go then, and good luck to you. But for the love of goodness be careful, Dost Mohammed."

"Sahib, I will be careful at least to live until I track down Gopi Lall."

CHAPTER VII

BOILEAU CALLS AGAIN

When lovely woman stoops to scorn,
Know this at least—the truth lies bare.
But when soft-murmured words entrance,
When sweet persuasive dimples dance,
When eyes allure, and smiles adorn,
Beware!

NOW, Captain Fitzherbert Cholmondeley Boileau was something of a devil of a man. There was no mistake about that, and nobody doubted it, least of all himself. He deliberately cultivated the impression. There was nothing really vicious, of course, in his whole makeup or he could neither have come by a commission in the Tail-Twisters, nor, once in the Regiment, have retained it. But he liked to be considered daring, and he was always on the lookout for an opportunity.

The blood that ran in his veins was the same sort that makes a brave and efficient officer of ordinary clay in any country; but in his case it ran rather more racily than usual, and the thought of danger to be courted, and above all of a dangerous woman to be courted, was like ozone to his nostrils.

Yasmini was dangerous. He had been warned against her by more than one native, by his brother officers on various occasions, and by his Colonel. And Yasmini had snubbed him and laughed at him. Therefore—the corollary was obvious—he and Yasmini were destined to cross foils at least once again.

The clerical work of the Regiment grew no less irksome to him as the sultry days wore on, and now that the Colonel had come back, and there was little chance of his getting a ride with the Regiment in any case, his ambition to get the red tape business over and done with died down in him. And he recalled most distinctly how the Colonel had been careful to advise, and not to order, him with reference to Yasmini.

It took him next to no time to make up his mind. On the third afternoon following his evening adventure at the Panch Mahal he got into civilian clothes and set off to Yasmini's strange jungle nest, this time unaccompanied.

She received him on this occasion without keeping him waiting, and with no exhibition of surprise. She seemed almost to have expected him. Evidently he had been seen approaching, for he had not stood for one minute before the little iron-studded door before the same maid that had admitted him the last time swung it open for him again, and smiled a welcome.

Yasmini came as before to the head of the narrow stair to meet him, and bowed again low to him as if he were the lord of all the East and she his handmaiden. But—wonder of wonders in the East!—she provided a European chair, on which he could sit, and even cross his knees, with dignity.

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WHEN he came before, she had deliberately tried to make him ill at ease by studied mockery. Now, though, she did exactly the opposite. Without asking him, she sent for sherbet, took the scented, colored stuff from the maid who brought it, and gave it to him with her own little jeweled hands. He drank it from pure politeness and wished immediately that he hadn't; but she betrayed no amusement at his efforts to straighten out his face and seem appreciative.

She was neither amused, nor yet suppliant. Her raiment was the same—as gorgeous and as wonderful—though slightly modified in color in artful regard to the altered light. It was she who had changed. She wore a look and manner of artless, ingenuous *camaraderie.*

"I want you to come here often," she smiled at him, standing before him for a minute, then subsiding with amazing grace among the billowy cushions by the window. He saw no waiting maids in evidence; but he did see that a curtain to her right moved gently, and he guessed that they were neither unseen nor unheard.

"That's awfully good of you, I'm sure."

He would have liked to kick himself the moment he had said it; but with her eyes on him, even when in her present mood, he could voice nothing but mechanically ready platitudes. Yet he was the Tail-Twisters' one expert in the game of flirting, just as he was their only Adonis, and the only white-skinned wrestler in the Regiment.

He was no one-sided, overbalanced ladies' man, but an all around soldier, with sporting instincts, ready wit, and steel wire nerve. But Yasmini—perhaps a hundred pounds of her—could hold him at her mercy! He did not understand the circumstance. On his way to her he had walked with the gait and buoyancy of youth in search of fresh adventure. In her presence he could only sit and let his ears grow red and finger his mustache.

"ARE there no other officers whom you could bring with you?" she purred.

That, for the moment, brought him to his senses.

"No. Thank goodness, there are not. I'm full of the idea of enjoying your acquaintance all to myself for the next day or two."

She smiled, and drooped her eyelids. Suddenly she clapped her hands and called for cigarettes. When the maid brought them she lit one, and ordered the rest set down between herself and Boileau.

"Are you then all alone?" she asked.

"No. There's the Colonel sahib."

"And he? Could he not come?"

"He could. He might. But why? Why ask him? Won't I do?"

"You? You are only one—and young—and——"

She blew great rings of cigarette smoke, and if she finished the sentence Boileau at all events did not catch the words.

"And the Colonel sahib," he answered, "is old—and stiff mannered—and pompous—and——"

"The others?"

"Won't be back for days, most likely. There's no knowing when. They're after Gopi Lall."

She reminded him of a snake the second he said that, though he could not have told why. There was nothing snake-like in her attitude, nor in her eyes; they glowed. He thought it must be something passing in her mind that reached him telepathically. After a few years in the East even the most materialistic, incredulous of men come to believe implicitly in things that savants of the West call foolishness.

"And where do they look for Gopi Lall?"

"Everywhere."

"How?"

"Oh, by quartering the country and asking questions, and keeping a bright lookout."

"And, should they fail to find him——?"

"They won't fail."

Now, she really did seem amused, and made no effort to conceal it.

"Will they find him because the men who look for him are mostly Rajputs, or because their officers are English?"

"For both reasons, I expect. But, tell me, why do you want all the other officers to call on you?"

Her eyes changed again, and the momentary display of amusement left her. Now it was a look of almost business acumen that stole across her face; she was a partner all at once, exchanging confidences.

"Because—because people in these parts, strangers to me, who know nothing of me

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and of whom I know nothing, have been saying things that they have no right to say."

"What sort of things?"

"Bad things. That I plot against the Government."

Boileau whistled.

"I hadn't heard of it."

"And if the officers of your famous Regiment should visit me from time to time, and see what passes here, and know what company I keep, whom I receive, of what they speak, then—then men will still talk, for no woman's tongue is the equal of a man's at slandering! But they will talk to little purpose."

"What harm could that kind of gossip do to you in any case?"

"Much harm. I want to stay here. I choose to stay here. I like this place."

She was almost vehement.

"But none can buy this house or the ground it stands on, since it has no owner. What, then, could I do were the police to come and order me away? Could I argue with them, or have I friends more powerful —yet? But if your officers should come, and come often, then the police would not dare interfere with an honored friend of theirs."

"Well, since you put it that way—mind you, I think you're needlessly alarmed—I'll ask Colonel Stapleton sahib to call on you."

"Will you? Please!"

"I suppose that means I sha'n't get another opportunity of seeing you alone?"

HE WAS recovering his nerve, now that she betrayed symptoms of not being quite at ease herself.

"We are not alone."

He eyed the curtain, that still moved gently from time to time.

"No? But—the maids are yours—an order——"

She raised her eyebrows very slightly, but enough to warn Boileau that he was what he would have called "running wide."

"Do your memsahibs receive our native gentlemen alone?" And that was an argument that was unanswerable.

"You're the most beautiful woman I ever saw," he said quite truthfully, but with a soldier's motive. He had of course the cavalryman's ingrained belief in flank tactics.

"Yes?"

She seemed scarcely interested.

"That is why you called a second time?"

"That is why I want to see you alone—why I don't want to bring the Colonel sahib or the others."

"You need not bring the others——"

He started almost to his feet.

"You could send them, one by one or two by two, whichever would be better, and come yourself some other time."

"Some evening? I am busy in the daytime."

"Some other time. You will be welcome. You will all be welcome."

She was eying him very narrowly now, and he was conscious of it. He knew perfectly well, too, that she was fencing with some definite end in view, quite different from the one she had professed. It needed little knowledge of the East to divine that much. Nothing in the East is ever done directly, least of all love making. Boileau remembered, then, that he was a very handsome man; and next, he realized again that she was eying him through lowered lids. With a flash of intuition it occurred to him that one English officer on the calling list of a native lady would be likely to cause scandal, whereas the better part of a dozen, calling constantly, would silence it. The rest would be a most effective blind. The one would——

"I begin to understand," he said, working away at his mustache.

She smiled at him bewitchingly, and he felt the blood go mounting to his temples. But he could not guess whether she was laughing at him, or was in love with him, or was approving his ready recognition of her subtlety.

"Then bring the Colonel sahib as a beginning," she said, nodding sagely. "Later, when the others come from seeking Gopi Lall, send them here also."

"Send the Colonel sahib now, you mean—to-day?"

"Why not to-day? Will the sudden summons disconcert him?"

Boileau laughed aloud at the idea of anything—of even a woman, however lovely—disconcerting Colonel Stapleton; he knew his Colonel from experience as being a man with a polite speech and a precept and a plan for every possible occasion.

"Is he very fierce? Is he unmannerly? I have seen him from a distance; his mustaches go like this."

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She imitated, very prettily, the motions of a military gentleman attending to the dressing of his upper lip.

"You'll find him courtlier than even your own native Princes when they come to ask favors of our Viceroy."

"Then bring him. Send him."

"Very well. But, Yasmini——"

"My lord?"

"Don't, for the love of goodness, make eyes at him. He'd get young again! We all want him to grow old; he's standing in the way of promotion."

"I? I make eyes at him?"

She bowed him out with a dignity that somewhat undermined his growing sense of intimacy. But she smiled at him again as he started down the stairs.

CHAPTER VIII

"Gopi Lall"

When scent is stale, when down the vale
The pack is cast, and cast in vain,
'Tis then the younger hounds give tongue,
But old hounds find the scent again.

FEW natives of the North of India would find it difficult to change their appearance, so far as their heads are concerned. Under their turbans they wear long black hair, that can be twisted and tangled into knots or let fall disheveled. It took Dost Mohammed less than half a minute to make himself look like a devil, or a fakir—which is much the same thing—or anything he chose to call himself, except a soldier. He made the change, though, well out of eyesight of the Regiment, for his own pride's sake.

A patch over one eye was easily arranged, and a cloth wrapped round his mouth prevented any one from knowing whether or not his lips were horrible. But his clothing was a different matter. So was his horse.

Two things were certain. Gopi Lall had not taken with him, and could not have obtained, a charger such as Dost Mahommed's; and Dost Mohammed would not think of starting on any kind of hunt without his horse.

The problem would have beaten any ordinary man. He did not dare, for instance, to borrow clothing from a villager, or to take it by main force, for news of such extraordinary conduct would have spread like wildfire, and if Gopi Lall should happen to be hiding anywhere within a radius of forty miles he would know within a day or less that an officer was after him disguised. Dost Mohammed had to find another way than that.

First, he let the troop ride out of sight of him. Then he picketed his horse in a hollow down among some trees, where he could not be overlooked. Nobody had troubled to ask him why he kept back a live goat from the tiny flock the Regiment had bought for sustenance, but now he proceeded to kill the beast, slicing off its head with one clean blow of his saber. Next he removed his stirrup irons and smeared them thoroughly with blood, and put more blood on the horse's withers and on his mane. Then he smeared plenty of the blood about himself, and eyed the whole result.

It was good. Any one might reasonably think that he had slain the horse's rider and ridden off on him. He stripped off his uniform and cached it together with his scabbard; but the saber itself he kept, smearing it with blood and holding it naked in his hand.

After a cautious look around him, he mounted and spurred out of the hollow at a gallop, careering like a man possessed, and giving a good imitation of a rider frightened of his horse, or not at ease on him.

He drew the horse up on his haunches at the first hut he came to, left him standing, and sprang like a lunatic, bare legged and blood-smeared, to the hut door, which he proceeded to hammer with his saber hilt until the frightened owner came. The man was speechless from sheer amazement—Dost Mohammed speechless for reasons of his own. Instead of speaking, he began to tear the loin cloth from the man's middle, hitting him a smart rap on the head with the saber hilt when he resisted. He had donned the loin cloth, leaped on his horse again, and ridden off before the man had time to more than realize that he had been attacked. Dost Mohammed left in the opposite direction to that his troop had taken, with the certainty in his mind that whether Gopi Lall were in the neighborhood or not the rumor of his being there would scatter broadcast within an hour.

He rode, now, to another hollow, and hid there until evening, with the double purpose of giving the rumor time to percolate, and the darkness a chance to hide what was probably a very poor resemblance to the

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robber. In the dark, with the story of his coming on ahead of him, he anticipated little or no risk of detection.

WHEN the low moon rose above the tree tops and the jungle noises had begun to greet the night, he rode out again, but this time far more leisurely, taking little care to look about him, but keeping his ears open for the sound of forage parties from his own Regiment. Before he had ridden twenty minutes at a walk, a woman slipped out of the scrub beside him and brought him a cooked chicken, with the whispered information that the troopers were in camp for the night, many miles away.

He seized the chicken, broke off a leg, and devoured it hungrily.

"Where is *she?*" he demanded, taking care to growl surlily from behind his mouth cloth, and looking anywhere but at her.

"She waits at home."

That was enough for the first try. This woman evidently knew Gopi Lall, and might possibly detect the disguise; but he had established one fact. There really was a particular one woman.

"So-ho!" thought Dost Mohammed. He drove his spurs in and decamped, cantering away without a word of thanks. He ran no risk in assuming that the real outlaw was a mighty ungrateful gentleman.

But "at home" was a vague direction, and soon he began almost to despair of ever getting nearer to the mark. No more women came to him surreptitiously, and the few shadowy forms he did see vanished the moment that he challenged them. He chased one man for nearly a quarter of a mile, only to lose him in the darkness—a piece of clumsiness for which he cursed himself soundly. Gopi Lall had a reputation for absolutely never missing anything or anybody, and, if he wanted to live on the outlaw's record for a while, it seemed he would have to be less punctilious.

He had determined to ride down and run through the next man who failed to halt when challenged, instead of trying to capture him; but the next man seemed to guess his thougths, and threw up his hands, and went down on his knees, begging for mercy.

"Where is she I seek?" growled Dost Mohammed.

"Sahib—Heavenborn—Prince of dacoits—how should I know?"

"Answer, or ——"

"Honorable one! Mercy! What have I done? What have I not done? I saw her but an hour ago, and she was yet there. But how do I know that she is there now?"

"Thou liest!"

"Nay, nay, Heavenborn! Tiger of the hills! How should I lie, who truly fear thee? I say I saw her—I say truth."

"I say thou liest!"

"If I lie, oh Gopi Lall——"

It was well! The disguise had worked so far at all events, and the rumor had spread, and there really was a woman!

"Harken! It is not my way to let men lie to me unpunished. Lead on! In case she be not there, pray to thy gods on the way thither, Jungli!"

"But, Heavenborn, I was going home—but a little way from here—my children wait—my little ones—my——"

"Lead on!"

"But, Prince of plunderers, let me go just one little minute to my home. I would warn my children; then I will go with thee willingly."

The saber whistled round the wretch's head, close enough to have shaved him had his beard been two days older. No Gopi Lall, nor any other expert, could have performed that feat better. The man's complaints came to a sudden end. He turned and settled down to run in front of the horse.

UNDER the cloth that hid his mouth, Dost Mohammed chuckled to himself; but he rode carefully, with his saber pointing downward to the peasant's back and with his ears and eyes on the alert. Three times they passed other men walking homeward, and because he did not challenge them, they made profound obeisance instead of running. One man even lay face downward on the path and beat the earth with flattened hands.

"The Colonel sahib was right," swore Dost Mohammed. "Too much honor is not good! As a soldier and a man of honor no man ever treated me to this."

For the best part of an hour they moved into the darkness as fast as the frightened peasant could run, Dost Mohammed noting his bearing carefully with the aid of the compass that every true fighting man should carry in his head. They were moving in a direction at right angles to that

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the extended troops had taken; before long, he calculated, he would cross a line between the Tail-Twisters and their quarters at Rajahbatkhowa.

They reached a clearing in the jungle, and there Dost Mahommed chose to stop and feed his horse.

"But, Heavenborn, why do this here? With but a quarter of a *coss* to go, and safety there, why wait?"

"An excellent reason!" thought Dost Mohammed. "Allah knows what will happen when I get there! *Chup!*" he growled aloud.

"The Heavenborn knows best."

"*Chup!* I ordered. Black earthworm!"

Twenty minutes later they went on again, and in less than five minutes after that they emerged into another clearing where a hut loomed darkly in the misty moonlight.

"There, Prince of plunderers! Said I not so? She waits!"

"Then go thy way and thank thy jungle gods!"

The man was gone more quickly than a frightened jackal; he turned, tucked his head down, and was gone. Dost Mohammed, with the cloth about his face drawn even higher yet, rode on.

"OH, GOPI LALL?" It was not a soft voice.

"Quietly!" growled the Rajput. He dismounted by a low fence, and stood waiting on the near side of his horse, fumbling with the stirrup.

"There are none here who listen. Thou mayest trust me! The troops—may Allah whelm them—are miles away. Oh, Gopi Lall, thou greatest fool of fools! You trust that woman, who is naught but a tigress and an enemy, while I, who truly love thee, wait alone. Come—eat, beloved."

"How knowest thou where I have been?" He answered huskily, and stood behind the horse where the moonlight could not fall on him.

"They have harmed thee? What is that? Thy throat? My Prince of——"

"Silence! The hurt is nothing. I asked, how knowest thou where I have been?"

"How! Hear him! Who sent thee all those messages? Who waits for thee always? Who but Yasmini? Sahib—Heavenborn—my lord! Trust not that tigress instead of me! She will slay thee in the dark, or hand thee over. She is thine enemy—naught else!"

Dost Mohammed, wondering what the real outlaw would have done if given such advice, took a chance and laughed. It seemed he had guessed right, for the woman behaved as if she quite expected it.

"Aye, laugh! Laugh on! Did she laugh, think you, when you slew her lover? Think you she forgot? Think you she came here from the distant North to sing you love songs? Bah! Thou art a madman, Gopi Lall! Thy head is turned by flattery. When did I ever flatter thee? Therefore, I who love thee wait alone, while she, who lies and lies and lies again, gets thee ever tighter in her clutches! Thou fool of fools!"

But Dost Mohammed knew enough. His thoughts came quick as lightning. The Regiment was twenty miles away, and in the wrong direction. To Rajahbatkhowa was roughly forty miles, and his charger was fresh enough to make the distance; for all his height the Rajput was a lightweight, and he could ride as only a born horseman of the North can. He was mounted and away, and thanking God that he had fed his horse, before the woman knew that he was starting; and a minute later he was down tight in the saddle, headed straight for the mess tent where his Colonel ought to be.

Ten minutes after he had gone, a dozen troopers burst in from the jungle and made the woman prisoner. They had with them the trembling peasant who had served as guide for Dost Mohammed.

"Where is thy man, Gopi Lall?" they demanded. But they might as well have asked the dead. Now the woman understood why he had galloped off without a word, and more than ever she idolized her robber lord, who could hear and see with his one eye so infinitely better than the eagles! She only prayed that he had not ridden off to Yasmini.

They questioned and cross questioned her for fifteen minutes, and threatened her with coarse military-Rajput oaths; but all her answers were denials.

"Good for thee," said a Rissaldar at last, turning to the trembling guide, "that we found thee on our way to camp, and not twenty miles from here! We would have hanged thee else. Go!"

And with that they booted him and spurred him and lance-pummeled him and chased him to the roadway.

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CHAPTER IX

THE PANCH MAHAL'S BACK DOOR

The trumpet sends men roaring on to death;
The cold gray dawn sees strong men grim and white;
Fire, water, and the devastating breath
Of pestilence breed panic's fright.
But, death in darkness—lurking, sheenless steel—
The grip of unseen hands—the hot, hissed breath—
The silent, gruesome fight with hand and heel
Unguessed at, unexpected—that is *death*.

COLONEL STAPLETON proved difficult in the matter of calling on Yasmini that evening, but Boileau stuck to his point. His private reason, of course, was that he wanted an excuse for going back again at once, but the reason he gave was one calculated to work on the Colonel's well known gallantry.

"Of course, sir, it's unusual, I know. But there you are. She's a lone woman, and she's frightened. She has a strange idea that the police will order her away unless we show we're friendly."

"But if she's up to no mischief, why on earth should she be afraid of the police?"

"You said yourself, sir, not so very long ago that the police lose all sense of decency, or words to that effect. They could make things pretty uncomfortable for an unprotected woman. You'd never believe, sir, how anxious she was for me to bring you along."

"I advised you not to go there again, you'll remember."

"I know you did, sir. I can only say I'm glad those weren't orders. I'd like you to see for yourself what kind of woman she is. Then you'd understand my calling there again."

The Colonel leaned back in his chair and looked hard at him for half a minute.

"I understand that much, at least, perfectly!" he answered. "Well—I'll go, since she's so anxious. But I shall give her plainly to understand that I can offer her no protection from the consequences of any action of her own, and I shall advise her to go away from here."

"Will you come this evening?"

"Yes, I'll come now and get it over."

So the Colonel called for his horse, and he and Boileau rode together to the Panch Mahal, with a trooper behind and a lantern bearer in front and a great display of dignity.

"It's a deuce of a strange hour to go calling on a native woman, Boileau, and I must confess I don't at all like it."

"You'll find she'll receive us well enough, sir."

THAT prophecy proved justified. Yasmini outdid herself. She was coquetry, and subtlety, and dignity and grace in one; and though she left no stone unturned to win her way to Colonel Stapleton's good graces, she let Boileau see that she was deeply in his debt for having brought him. If Boileau chose to misinterpret some of the soft glances that she sent him, that was understandable at least; and he was too overcome by Yasmini's spell, and too amused by the Colonel's evident amazement, to reason like a man of sense.

He forgot for the time being the gulf that separates the Englishman and native women of far lower caste than Yasmini; forgot that though the *purdah* might be absent for the once the rule of centuries remained the same; and remembered only that he was a very handsome man and she a lovely woman.

The Colonel told Yasmini what he had said he would. But he put it so delicately, in punctilious and perfect Hindustani, that all of the sting was taken out of it; he sounded more like a courtier assuring her of everlasting homage than a cavalry Colonel declining his moral and material support.

"You see," he said, "it's no business of mine to ask you why you happen to be here. Any man with half an eye can see at a glance that you are charming, and as clever as you are beautiful. Therefore, madam, if you'll excuse my saying so, people are quite justified in wondering why you don't look for more healthful quarters. The neighborhood of this jungle can not be too wholesome; now, can it?"

"I have good reasons for being here—very good ones, Colonel sahib. Colonel sahib, may not a woman have her little secrets—or her big ones?"

"Certainly she may—and always does."

He bowed as a man conferring privileges.

"But she must not blame mere man for wondering what those secrets are," he added.

He rose to go, but she begged him not to. She offered him refreshment, entertainment, anything; she called for her maids to

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dance and play on their guitars, and then, because he still persisted with his air of courteous but unpersuadable dignity, she drew him aside and whispered to him.

"I would like to tell you why I stay here, Colonel sahib; but it must be only for your ears. Then you will understand, and will protect me."

"I can promise you nothing," he warned. "Nothing, that is to say, more than is due to any woman from any man."

"But I must tell it to you alone."

"You'd better go, Boileau!" he said across his shoulder.

He was facing Yasmini, looking down into her eyes, and beginning to feel her spell. Boileau got up, bowed, and started for the stairs, but she left the Colonel and came over to him.

"He won't remain," she whispered. "I am sure he won't. But I am frightened. I must have some one here this evening. Will you return?"

"I'll do anything you say!"

"Then do you go straight home—straight home—" she laid one light hand on his shoulder, and he thrilled—"and when he returns, ride back again to me!"

"Why straight home?" wondered Boileau. "What earthly difference can that make to her?"

He did ride straight home; but when he reached his tent he was still wondering.

"Is she up to mischief with the Colonel now, I wonder? Can't be! Still—I took him there, and I'm responsible."

He called for his horse again, and then countermanded the order and sent for his personal servant, who came running with a lantern. Then he once more changed his mind, and took the lantern himself and started off.

BEFORE he had gone a quarter of a mile he saw another lamp, and caught sight of the Colonel's charger; he turned almost instinctively into a narrow track that led to the right of the main path. He felt ashamed of himself a moment later, but continued since he did not care to let the Colonel know that he had sought concealment and then changed his mind. He suspected that the narrow path that he had taken must come out eventually near the Panch Mahal, since there were no other buildings near to which a used track could lead.

His surmise proved correct. After half an hour of stumbling through the pitchy blackness, shuddering at the thought of snakes, he came out of the jungle at a corner of the Panch Mahal that he had never seen before, and stood still for a moment looking at it. It was not the exact rear of the building, but a wing that projected to the right of the rear in the direction of the thickest jungle, and there were no lights in the windows up above to prove that that part of the building was occupied. He could see the wall, though, clearly, for it was white, and he could make out the shape of the open windows.

The next thing he noticed was that a thick, knotted rope hung down from the top window nearly to the ground, swaying gently in the breeze. Then he heard a voice, and listened. The words were Hindustani, and the voice beyond doubt Yasmini's.

"Any sign of him yet?"

"Not yet."

He remembered then that two of Yasmini's maids were from Madras, and that she had to use the common tongue of India to communicate with them. All the same, he wondered why he listened, and thought no better of himself for doing it.

"Go further, then, and see if he is coming. There *must* be at least one white man here to-night!"

"Now, what in blazes is the game?" thought Boileau.

He was not without brains, and, once his suspicions were aroused, not at all easy to trick. He much more than suspected now that Yasmini's desire to see him was not actuated by any admiration. His cavalry training, too, had seeped into his system and made action—prompt, unexpected action—an essential remedy for doubt. He stooped, loosed the straps beneath his insteps that held his trousers tight, and pulled off his spurs. Then he saw some one, whom he took to be Yasmini herself, come to the window, haul up the rope, and hang the coils on some kind of projection. But when she went away the rope fell down again. She had left the window open.

Adventure—and excitement—and something primitive he could not have named—mystery and the lure of it—began to call to Boileau. The military were in charge now of operations against the outlaw, and as an officer he remembered that he had the right

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to investigate suspicious circumstances. Too—and that was not to be overlooked—his sudden appearance through a window might appeal to Yasmini's feeling for romance. And then, he wanted to; and that was a good enough reason in itself. All of those arguments left quite out of account a feeling deeper down that told him there was danger near at hand. Danger never called to Boileau unanswered.

HE WALKED up and seized the rope and jerked it. It was made fast at the top. A moment later he was shinning up it, as fast as a native could have done, and thanking Heaven that he had left his spurs behind.

He vaulted lightly through the window, and landed on something nearly solid that lay on a divan underneath. A second later the something grunted, and an arm like a black snake licked out of the darkness, and he felt the sting of a knife that seared his cheek. Quicker than thought itself he gripped the wrist he could not see, wrenched at it, and sent the knife spinning; he heard it fall some distance away on wood. Next he was locked in a native wrestler's hold that was something new in his experience. Not a word was said nor another sound made but heavy breathing. He was fighting for dear life against a slippery antagonist, who stank enough to sicken him, but whom he could not see!

CHAPTER X

THE COLONEL RETRACTS A STATEMENT

Oh, any man who is a man can wade into a scrap,
And any man who's half a man can punch a fellow's map,
Can swap hard punches toe to toe
And give the reason why;
But could you—said your orders so—
Go black a lady's eye?

COLONEL STAPLETON sat before his tent, gasping in the stuffiness and trying to forget the spell that Yasmini had cast on him in common with every other man who came within the radius of her eyes. He lit a cigar, and swore at himself—gently, because unless the Colonel of a regiment respects himself his men will not respect him—but comprehensively.

"I ought to be a long way from my second childhood yet!" he muttered. Then he pricked his ears.

"Headed this way, by gad! Shod horse—tired, too, and ridden hard! News from one of the troops, I'll be bound."

With an outlaw on the rampage, and military stores worth stealing under tents, even a General of Division would have been made to halt and give an account of himself before proceeding. None but members of the Regiment knew the password. But he heard the challenge and the answer, and no even momentary check. It was surely news from the scene of operations.

A foaming horse reeled out of the blackness and stopped, heaving and sobbing, before his tent. From his back a figure leaped who looked like a devil fresh from Tophet—who held a naked saber in his hand—whose long black hair was loose and tangled—but who brought the saber up to the salute like a soldier and a swordsman.

"*RUNG HO, BAHADUR!* Again I bring good news!"

"Why, Dost Mohammed! What in Heaven's name——"

"Gopi Lall, *Huzoor*, is now—can be taken alive—at Yasmini's!"

"Are you straight from there?"

"No, sahib."

The Colonel sprang to his feet, stepped up to Dost Mohammed, and looked straight into his eyes.

"Are you sure you're sane?" he asked.

"Sane, sahib, and not a little weary—but we lose time!"

"I myself left Yasmini's less than an hour ago—much less. She invited me, and she did her best to prevent my leaving."

"None the less, sahib, Gopi Lall is there."

"What makes you think so?"

"Sahib, is there time for argument? I tracked him—I found his woman in the hills—I listened to her. Colonel sahib, I did not ride like this for the fun of it!"

"But, man alive, if Gopi Lall is really there, why should she ask me of all people not to go away?"

"Proof, *Huzoor*, if proof were lacking! With your Honor in her house, who would dare suspect her? With you in charge of operations against Gopi Lall, would the police or any one dare look for him in the house where you were? Would a woman of the race and caste of Yasmini—under your favor, sahib—consent to receive an European in her house on any terms or for any

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motive not dishonest? Think, sahib! Colonel sahib—think and hasten!"

"Dost Mohammed, we must have other evidence than this. She's a woman—a defenseless woman. I can't on mere hearsay invade her house and search it, and put her to shame and inconvenience. I can have the house watched, surrounded; I've plenty of troopers here for that. But, enter the house, accuse her without evidence? I think not!"

"Colonel sahib, have I run this risk, put on this shame of a disguise, found his trail, and ridden thus, for nothing? Know you aught of Yasmini? Know you aught of me? Is a high caste woman, who lets down the *purdah* and receives Europeans, to weigh more in the balance than I? Am I a soldier, or a carrier of nurses' tales? My record—is that nothing?"

He threw his hands up in a gesture of despair; but Colonel Stapleton had come to a decision.

"Orderly!" he called.

A man appeared, like an armed ghost from the shadows.

"Turn out the guard!"

Half a minute later the clank of sabers told that the order had been obeyed.

"Have you a spare uniform where you can get it, Dost Mohammed?"

"Yes, Colonel sahib."

"Then put it on. Hurry. Take command of the men and start at once. Surround the house—unseen and unheard if possible. I will ride to the front door and ask admittance."

THE native officer saluted and made off, leading his foundered horse and talking to it caressingly. Colonel Stapleton went back into his tent and picked up a copy of the Indian Penal Code. He turned over the pages hurriedly.

"I always did say," he ground his teeth as he muttered, "that police work is no business for a gentleman. Orderly!" he called. "Send Captain Boileau sahib here to me."

"*Ne hai, sahib.*"

"What? Not here? Not in camp? What d'ye mean? When did he go?"

The orderly told of Boileau's return on horseback, and of his setting out again on foot.

"Then that must have been his lantern that I saw. He's back there, is he? Um-m-m!"

He was growing puzzled, and rather more suspicious than he cared to feel. At that moment he heard the guard ride off, so he called for his own charger and started after them, growing every second more resentful of the circumstances that could put such a distasteful duty in his path. He rode alone to Yasmini's little door and tied his horse outside; and Yasmini, alone, admitted him.

"The Colonel sahib—back—again—so soon!"

There were wonder and amusement, but mostly gladness, in her voice. She seemed to think that this was a sending of the gods.

"Madam," he said with dignity (only he used the statelier native word that means "mistress of many servants"), "I am in receipt of information that has made this visit necessary."

Her eyes opened wide, but she showed no sign of embarrassment—only interest and curiosity.

"Why wait here at the door? Will not the Heavenborn——?"

Instead of finishing the sentence, she floated up the stairs ahead of him. He could have sworn that her little gilded slippers did not touch the carpet. He could have sworn, too, and much more positively, that though there was no maid there to close it the studded door slammed tight behind him.

He refused to sit. She reclined, cushioned and languorous, on a divan and lit a cigarette. But there were no maids there to protect her, and the Colonel was a man of manners. He stood before her, at least four yards away.

"I am told that the outlaw Gopi Lall is in your house!"

She laughed at him. It was silvery, fairy laughter, spontaneous, musical, irresistible—sheer, frank amusement. He was laughing too before he knew it—laughing and twisting his mustache, and fighting with the tendency to run away.

"Surely that is a wonder of a joke. Who is the wit? Name him, Colonel sahib."

"A man of my own Regiment, mistress of many servants—a man whose word I must respect, at least to the extent of trying at all events to verify it. I have reason to suppose, too, that an officer of mine—the Captain Boileau whom you know—is also here."

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THIS time Yasmini was not amused. Her eyes changed and she clenched her little hands on a cushion in indignant anger.

"By what right—on whose honor—to what end—do you—dares any one say that?" She snarled it like a tigress, and leaned up on one elbow looking—all lovely though she was—like an animal about to spring.

"Curse!" muttered the Colonel to himself.

"Do I, then, keep a trysting place for British officers?"

"As I have already said, madam, I don't know what you keep here, what you do here, or why you stay. You must excuse me if I feel obliged to say that it is hard to believe what you told me this evening. That story about hidden treasure is—ah—well—ah—is—I would like to believe it! Won't you help me to?"

"You mean?"

"I mean that it is necessary that I should see for myself who or what is in this house. No one could regret the necessity more than I, but such is the fact."

"You can not! You dare not!"

Now she was on her feet.

"It is against all custom—contrary to law!"

"The law is, madam, that I must ask admittance, then ask leave to search. If, after a reasonable time for reflection, that leave is refused me, I then have the right to use force if necessary."

"That is not the law!"

She faced him with her chin up, eyes ablaze; and he felt his heart melting inside him at the sight of outraged womanhood.

"Go, sir! Leave me! You are insolent!"

"Madam, I shall be very glad to go when I am satisfied that you have no one hidden here. I have a most unpleasant duty to perform—one that you could make much easier for me if you would."

"You shall not!"

She stamped her foot, and looked even lovelier angry than when she purred.

"I dare you to search my house!"

"And I unfortunately must insist, much though I regret it."

It was a deuce of a predicament for a man whose creed was courtesy! He had to keep reminding himself that a soldier was a man who did his duty under any circumstances.

"Are you a man of honor?"

Those amazing, blazing eyes seemed able to read into his mind! She saw that she had made a home thrust, but—cleverer than many of her kind—instead of following it up until the wound was numb, she changed her tactics instantly.

"Colonel sahib!"

Now she was pleading with him—with the pathos in her voice of a cruelly ill treated child. Reproach, petition, dumb, questioning unbelief shone out of her eyes, and her movement even was in part.

"It was truth I told you. There is, there must be, treasure hidden here. I am here to find it, that is all. If I told what I know, the half of India would be here with pick and shovel to forestall me."

"I am here to look for Gopi Lall, not treasure," answered Stapleton. "If he is not here, my search can do no harm."

"No harm? An insult to your honor is no harm, eh, Colonel sahib? Are all soldiers, then, outragers of women's privacy—or are some soldiers better than the rest?"

He pulled himself together with an effort, remembering that the sooner this beastly business was over and done with the better for him and her.

"Once more, madam, I ask your permission to search this house."

"And I refuse it!"

"And I am a soldier and a gentleman!" thought Stapleton. Aloud he said, "Then I must fall back on my authority, and search without your leave."

HE STEPPED to the nearest door, which was hidden by a curtain to his left and to her right—nearer by two yards to him than her. But she was there before him. Those who had ever seen her dance could have believed anything of her, but to him her movement seemed to have been almost supernatural. She faced him, back against the door, with arms folded on her heaving bosom and her whole blue, gauzy dress vibrating with the passion that possessed her.

"Now! I dare you!"

"Madam, this house is surrounded. No one can get away unseen—not even you or I. There is no sense in trying to prevent me. Why, I could whistle and call up forty troopers to enforce my orders."

"Do it, then! I dare you!"

She was a better hand than he at reading minds. If she were bluffing, she was

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certainly disposed to go the limit. Was he? Was he prepared to order in half a troop of cavalry, to trample through her house and upset things, and do by force what he could do so delicately? Not while he had one slim chance left of avoiding it!

His suspicions, of course, were thoroughly aroused by this time. No maids, no Boileau, no leave to search, Dost Mohammed's positiveness, Yasmini's concern—there were too many circumstances to explain away. Search he must, and would, although he hated himself more each instant. He reached past her, and felt under the curtain for the fastening of the door. In an instant she was at his throat!

No tigress ever sprang more quickly or more savagely. He felt her grip—and Heavens! how strong her little fingers were! He saw her free hand go to her bosom. Like a flick of light he caught the sheen of steel. So he set his throat muscles, and used both hands and all his strength and energy in the effort to obtain the knife. But she held it out, away from him, and her strong, lithe fingers gripped his throat until he had to spare one hand in the effort to wrench them loose.

Then the knife slithered for his ribs, and he guarded with his forearm only just in time. He seized her around the waist, raised her off her feet—she weighed almost nothing—and swung her round and round and round, hoping to lay her on her back. But her fingers still dug in and the supple, graceful little tigress drew in—in—in along his arms until her face touched his, then writhed, and twirled, and tripped him—him! The six-foot Colonel of a regiment of Bengal Horse lay struggling on his back, with a slip of a woman who weighed a hundred pounds his master!

She had lost the throat grip in the sudden fall, but would he shout for help? Would he let his troopers see him at the mercy of a dancer? Or let them see him fighting with a woman? He saw the gleam of the knife again, and seized her, and crushed her to him, and got the wrist at last. The fight that followed was the worst in his experience.

EVEN then, he would not hurt her willingly. He wanted the knife; with that in his possession, or tossed out of her reach, he had no doubt of what the end would be. But he could not get the knife. She seemed to want his life-blood, and fought for it with the ferocity of a tiger-cat—although no animal that ever breathed would have shown half of her brain and courage. Her dancer's muscles were as strong as his, and far more active; her very smallness placed him at a disadvantage, to say nothing of his gentlemanly fear of hurting her. She showed no fear of hurting him!

She tried to get her fingers in his eyes. Her hair was down and round her shoulders, and time and again she used it as a weapon of offense, shaking her head until it fell in waves over his eyes and blinded him. Then the wrist that held the knife would jerk spasmodically, and he would save himself by nothing else than sheer, brute strength. He held on tight to her slender wrist, but it felt like a steel wire hawser gloved in satin; a hold on the lance of a charging enemy would have been as easy!

They fought all over the floor of the room, up on their feet, then down again. His breath came short now, in labored gasps, and he doubted whether he could have shouted loud enough to make the troopers hear, even if he had cared to try. But she had begun to smile, through lips that had grown strangely cruel, and her breath came evenly. She would dance away from him, swoop in again and try to trip him, and dance away.

Once she all but got her wrist free, but he followed and held on; then she came in toward him like a flash of blue light, and tangled herself between his legs and threw him. He reeled to the floor with a crack that brought the sparks.

He heard her chuckle, saw the flash of steel again, collected all his strength for one more effort to draw her in and crush the breath out of her—when, "Hold!" cried a voice he knew. A second later Boileau had her in his arms, tight pinioned from behind, and held her helpless.

"Have the honor to report, sir, that I've just killed Gopi Lall, or somebody who answers his description."

The Colonel rose to his feet, rubbing his head, and wishing he could rub a dozen places all at once. He noticed then that Boileau was panting too, that his mess jacket was blood soaked and torn in ribbons, and that there were bruises on his arms. He stepped up to Yasmini, and took her knife. She surrendered it quite readily.

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"I can not fight two gentlemen!" she said, with the accent very strongly on the last word.

"Confound it, Boileau! This is a deuce of an unpleasant business! What did you say? Killed Gopi Lall? Where? How? Hold her! Hold that woman!"

"He need not hold me!" she answered scornfully. "I am helpless. I surrender."

"Hold her wrists for the present!" commanded Stapleton. "Where did you say you killed him?"

"In the room at the end of that passage, sir."

"Come and show me. Bring her, too."

The Colonel took one wrist, and Boileau the other. Between them they led Yasmini along the passage.

"A neat way of repaying hospitality!" she sneered.

But her manner changed the moment that she saw what Boileau had to show. He had lit two lamps before he left the room, and by their dim light they could make out what the room contained.

ON THE floor, by the divan near the window, in the room which Boileau had entered by means of the knotted rope, there lay a one-eyed monster of a man, stone dead. His one sound eye was starting from its socket, and the tongue protruded through scarred and ghastly blue-dyed lips. Both arms were curled, fists clenched, above his head in an attitude of dying agony, and from between them foul, greasy, black locks of hair protruded like a nest of snakes.

"Choked him, sir. Had to. Tried to knife me in the dark; then got a brand new hold on me, and tried to break my neck."

His explanation was cut short by Yasmini. She shrieked, tore her hands loose, then threw her head back and wailed. It sounded like a love song, or a death chant—or else a chant about the death of love. And then she shrieked again. Boileau made a move to seize her wrists.

"Leave her alone!" commanded Stapleton.

Together they stood still and watched her, dry-eyed and terrible in grief—disheveled, and a dozen times more beautiful than ever so. There was a knife in the dead man's *cummerbund*, but neither of them noticed that.

Suddenly she sprang, seized the knife, and drew it. Stapleton and Boileau jumped on the defensive, ready to disarm her, but she took no notice of them. Instead, she knelt, and stared down at the dead man's one protruding eye. Then, with a curse that raised the hair of both who watched, she plunged the long knife deep into the eye, and drew it out and plunged it in the body—and drew it out and plunged it in again—again—again!

"By gad, I can't watch that!" swore Stapleton.

"Shall I——?"

"No. Don't touch her. Yasmini!"

She stopped, and looked up. Then she rose and glared at both of them. They stepped forward, but she threw down the knife and stood with her bloody hands beside her, so they both stepped back again.

"Dogs! Devils! Rob me, would you, of revenge? You might have taken jewels—money—clothes—I would have laughed! Revenge was all I asked, or sought or lived for! Officers! Lords of India! Mouthers about honor! You have taken my honor from me. What is left?"

She was silent for a minute, fighting back her sobs; but if ever dumb eyes swore, hers blazed blasphemy.

"See—robbers of a woman's honor!—I will show you."

Drawing a key from her bosom, she went to another door, opened it, and motioned them to come and look. So they stood beside her and peered in, feeling like men about to pry on some one's sacred secrets.

"I had that ready for him——for tonight! Until midnight my maids were to have watched, lest the police should get on his trail and interfere. I had no fear of soldiers—only the police. Had they come, I had another plan all ready—another place to lure him to. You fools—you honor-robbers—were but meant to allay police suspicions; they have watched this house from time to time of late. See! See what you have saved that murderer by slaying him!"

THERE was little in the stone-floored room except an iron chair, but the purpose of that was evident. It had twisted wire straps made fast to it; a man could have been bound in the chair with their aid so that he could not move. Beside the chair were braziers, heaped with charcoal; and by them pincers, and little

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rods of steel, and tiny awls, and lengths of wire, and needles—a complete assortment of instruments of torture!

"He would have lived three days, or more, under my hand!" hissed Yasmini between set teeth.

"But why? What had you got against the man?"

Colonel Stapleton was more bewildered now than ever.

"I? Because that pig of pigs, that one-eyed plunderer of offal heaps, that carrion, slew my lover, my Prince, my Maharaja, the one love of my life! He ran! The ratlouse ran! He made suspicion fall on me. But I followed—I, with only a dozen maids to help me. I tricked him. I trapped him. I had a bone to pick with Gopi Lall! I would have picked it, but for you!"

"But how did you get him here?"

"The mad, conceited swine imagined that I loved him—as certain other dogs have done!"

She looked a little too hard at Boileau, when she said that, for his peace of mind.

"Sahib!" called a voice. "*Huzoor!* Colonel sahib!"

Stapleton walked over to the window and leaned out.

"Is that you, Dost Mohammed?"

"Aye. Have you found him, sahib?"

"Yes. He's here. He's dead."

"Who killed him?"

"Captain Boileau."

"Present my compliments to Captain Boileau sahib. Tell him that his hands will be undefiled when they are washed."

"You'd better send two troopers up here, Dost Mohammed, to take charge of the body and watch until morning. Come up with them. Have you seen anything of the maidservants?"

"They are here, sahib, all here; they were watching in the jungle. We came on them before they could give the alarm."

"Let them come up, then, to wait on their mistress."

Twenty minutes later Colonel Stapleton and Boileau started campward side by side.

"Let this be a lesson to you, Boileau my boy! How did you come to be up there?"

"Saw a rope, sir, and climbed up through a window."

"A bally ungentlemanly thing to do!"

"It put an end to another gentleman's career, sir!"

"Yes. And for that, and another reason, I won't refer to it again. But, as I said, let this be a lesson to you. If ever you get to be the Colonel of a regiment, don't—don't ever—on any grounds at all—insist on helping the police!"

"I'll try to remember it, sir."

"I feel as if I'd robbed that woman, though that's absurd of course. If anybody'd told me that once—ever in my life—I would lay hands on a woman, even in self-defense, I would have thought him mad. And here I've actually fought a woman. I had thought, and I have said repeatedly, that there are no circumstances under which a soldier can not be a gentleman. I retract it. There is one. When engaged on police duty he runs a very serious risk!"

CHAPTER XI

(Which has no verse or title to head it, but which leaves the reader with a feeling that he would like to read some more of Yasmini.)

THE Tail-Twisters rode back to Balibhum after another week had passed, and left the police behind them to gnash their teeth and curse their luck. There were five thousand good rupees not in police pockets that a grudging Government had paid by way of blood reward for Gopi Lall.

What made the police so angry was not so much the fact that the Regiment had "wiped their eye" for them, for the native Indian policeman has neither shame nor sportsmanship nor anything but criminal ideas. Nor was it so much that they did not get the money. It was who did get it that annoyed them.

There were something like a thousand native gentlemen and sixteen officers entitled to a share in that reward. Dost Mohammed had the lion's claim, but he had sworn to touch no copper pice of it. Therefore there were in the neighborhood of five rupees a head to be divided up among the host. And, five rupees is, say, a dollar and two thirds.

The British officers, of course, declined their share, and the native officers all followed suit in Dost Mohammed's wake. It was down to the troopers, then, to make fair division of the spoil; and they took a vote on it.

They had many of them lounged, and smoked, and listened up at Yasmini's. They had all eye-worshipped her, and some

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had heard her sing. Some, even, had seen her dance. The rest all wished that they had done these things, and some pretended that they had.

The vote, then, was unanimous. They took the lot to her, in hundred-rupee Bank of India notes, on a salver carried on crossed sabers. And she danced for them out in the middle of the courtyard, while they sat their horses in appreciative silence.

And, when the police came a few days later to make trouble, and to order Yasmini away, and (perhaps) receive a little blackmail, Yasmini was gone.

For years after that it was the fashion among subalterns, and civilians, and others who were stony broke but visionary and believing, to ask for leave and travel to Rajahbatkhowa where the Panch Mahal and the hidden jungle city is. There they would hunt for the fabled hidden treasure that was said to have brought Yasmini so far.

They never found a trace of it, though the architectural societies and antiquarians had reason to be thankful—which goes to show how practical the gods who make men mad can be.

BUT, many years later, long after the sporadic search for hidden treasure had died a natural death and the jungle had covered up again the traces of it, there was a woman up at Delhi who would tell strange stories in the evening, when the fancy seized her, and there were listeners enough. She had once been maid to Yasmini.

She told the story with a thousand varying details—for who wants to listen to the same plain tale twice over?—of the outlaw's death, and of the officer who killed him with his hands, and of the Colonel sahib who fought with Yasmini and got the worst of it. But she added other things that at the time the story happened would have been of most absorbing interest to the police. They had been among the greediest hunters for the fabled hidden treasure; but they had hunted too, and far more thoroughly, for something else.

Where had the outlaw's loot gone? It was commonly computed at a lakh of silver coin, and though a tenth of that would have been quite a considerable sum for an outlaw to amass in such a district, still the estimate increased as years rolled on, and every one believed it. Surely it was hidden somewhere!

But the former maid of Yasmini's would tell how, night after night for three nights, Gopi Lall would come beneath the window of the Panch Mahal, and how she and Yasmini would lower down a rope, and draw up heavy burdens, close-wrapped in cloth. She had no notion what was in the packages, nor yet had any one—but Yasmini.

And Yasmini, who wove herself most diligently into the inner history of India, never seemed to lack for capital, nor sense to hold her tongue.

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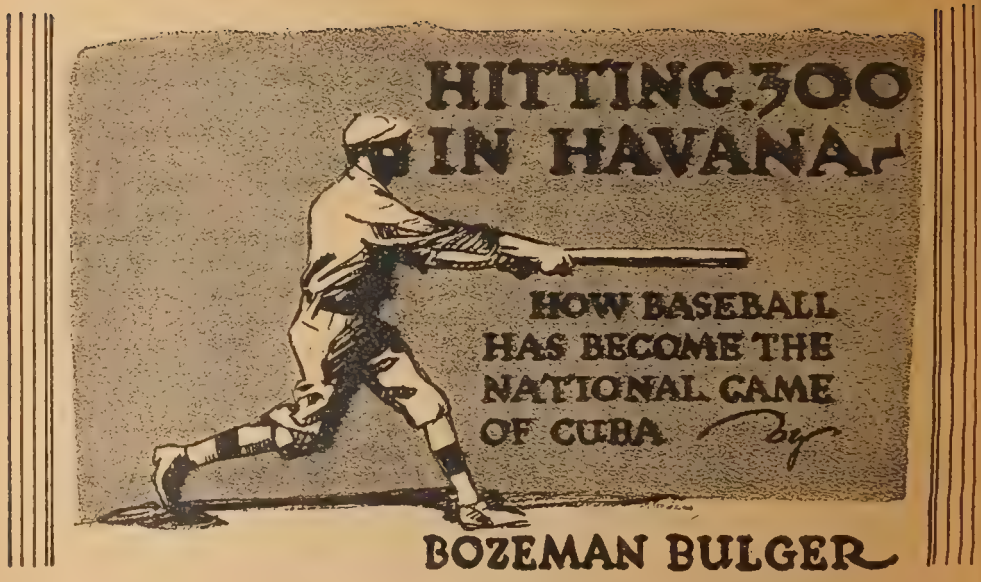

AT THE Luz, a famous restaurant on the water's edge of Havana Harbor, a visiting American baseball writer was being dined by the members of the *Asociacion de Cronistas de Sports*. It was considerable party. Havana, you know, is much larger than the average American citizen would believe. Six hundred thousand people live there and twenty-three daily papers are required to keep them informed as to the doings of the day. Most of these doings during the Winter months are of a baseball nature.

There are, therefore, as many baseball writers in Havana as in New York, the difference being that every one of the Cuban scribes takes his job most seriously. It was several days before this had dawned on the visiting American, who was accustomed to treating the national pastime lightly and regarding all those who got worked up over it as "bugs." This made it comparatively easy for him innocently to fall into a controversy that upset the Island.

Just as the coffee was being served—and, by the way, they have coffee down there that is strong enough to burn the hair from a dog's back—Señor Rafael Conte, President of the Association and interpreter for the non-English speaking members, turned to the visitor.

"Now that you have seen the clubs in action, señor, what do you think of our ball players?"

"Why, I've only seen two games," parried the visitor.

"But you have seen both the Almendares and the Habanas. Do you think they compare with the American players?"

"Certainly," was the attempt at a diplomatic reply. "They play excellent baseball, even though defeated by the Athletics."

There was a clatter of Spanish tongues at the other end of the table and Señor Conte stopped to listen. All eyes again turned on the visiting writer, who was beginning to feel a trifle embarrassed.

"They ask that you select nine players from the two Cuban teams to be known as your pick for the All-Cuban Team."

As the visitor had paid little attention to the individual work of the players, this was a tough one. But never let it be said that an American scribe would falter when it came to answering a question. In New York we do it whether possessed of sufficient knowledge or not. The American turned to the sporting editor of *El Mundo*, who sat next to him, and who could speak English, and asked for a list of the players. Señor Munoz immediately brought out his scorebook.

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HOW THE ALL-CUBAN TEAM WAS PICKED

"GIVE me an idea of the best players," the American asked in a whisper. With the assistance of Munoz and Conte he had picked out nine names. As a matter of fact he knew nothing about them at all, and without assistance he couldn't have remembered their names an hour. The list was handed to Señor Conte. With great deliberation he read them to the other writers, who reached for pencils and paper and got busy. In a minute there was another outburst of Spanish.

"What's the argument?" inquired the mystified American.

"They are trying to decide whether the afternoon or morning papers shall have the story of your selection first. This will cause a sensation!"

"Can you beat that!" the American exclaimed to his fellow tourist, the paying teller of a New York bank, who had been invited to the dinner. "I thought this thing was all a kid."

"They've got you hooked now," gleefully remarked the banking man. "You've got to go through with it."

True to the traditions of baseball writing in the States, the American stuck by his list and took a chance.

The next morning the baseball world of Havana was in a turmoil. The list of Cuban players selected by the *Americano* appeared in the morning papers. By the time the afternoon editions appeared there were no less than one hundred violent protests from fans in the hands of the sporting editors. Not all were antagonistic, however. That night the morning papers had just as many letters defending the selection of the *Americano*. The visitor's mail box was chugged tight with communications.

At the ball park the following day the American writer was recognized and cheered by those who agreed with him, while those who took the opposite view remained politely silent. They were willing to wait. Soon the controversy reached the players' bench and they were quickly divided, the selected ones being pointed out by the fans as they came to the bat.

The controversy finally reached such proportions that Señor Jiminez, owner of Almendares park and the biggest baseball magnate in Cuba, issued a public statement in which he said it was best that the argument be settled by actual play on the diamond. He volunteered the use of his grounds for a game to be played between the team selected by the American writer and another picked by Señor Conejo, the official scorer of Havana. The gate receipts, it was decided at the last minute, would be given to the Baseball Writers' Association as a Christmas present.

The partizans lined up early. When the first ball was pitched there were 14,000 people in the stands!

"How did it come out?" did you ask?

Well, the team selected by the American was beaten by a score of 4 to 3 in eleven innings, the winning run being scored on an error. But that only added fuel to the argument. For two weeks afterward the controversy continued in the papers. They are now demanding a return engagement.

Whether I have succeeded or not, the point I have tried to bring out is the serious way in which the Cuban takes his baseball. The incident as told is absolutely the truth. I was the American who made the selection and I must confess that Munoz and Conte helped me to pick a good club. Otherwise I might have had the substitutes as stars. The fans of Cuba, after seeing this confession, may put me down as an American faker, but the truth will come out sooner or later, and this is why I hasten to turn State's evidence in the hope of immunity.

EXEUNT BULL-FIGHTING AND JAI-A-LAI; ENTER BASEBALL

THOUGH baseball has been played in Cuba for twenty-five years the game did not really take the country by the nape of the neck and make it pop until bull-fighting was stopped, along about the time of the first American occupation. Following the death of that rather sanguinary, though exciting, sport, came *jai-a-lai*.

Jai-a-lai is a good wholesome game in itself, but it had to end on account of betting. The game is something like handball with an added element of danger. It is played in an enclosed court two hundred feet long and fifty feet wide. A hard ball is bounced from the high walls and is caught with a kind of wicker basket, narrow and curved, somewhat resembling in shape the mud-guard on a bicycle.

The hard ball can be thrown with great velocity and bounds back like a bullet. To

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dodge this swiftly shot ball requires great agility and the dexterous manner in which the players catch it in the wicker baskets and return it is really wonderful. *Jai-a-lai* is perhaps the most exciting of all games, but without the added zest of betting the Cubans will not have it.

The only sport left to the Cuban, naturally excitable, is baseball and they go to it hook, line and sinker. An ordinary exhibition game in Havana will cause more furore than a world's series game to decide a pennant in the States.

The system of baseball in Cuba is quite different from that in the United States. They have no regular league organization. There are three crack teams: the Almendares, the Habanas and the Fes. The latter word is the Spanish equivalent for the plural of Faith.

These three teams play a series of games every Winter for the championship of Cuba. These bitterly fought contests are played in Almendares Park, which is owned by Señor Eugenio Jiminez, a wealthy distiller of Havana, and its leading sportsman.

In the United States, as almost any boy knows, the players are signed by the year and paid stipulated salaries, the result of the games having nothing whatever to do with their pay. It is different in Cuba. The players get a share of the gate receipts, and consequently realize the importance of being a winner. The more successful the team the bigger the crowds they draw. The one objection to this system is that it offers opportunities and temptations for the players to be dishonest. It is not uncommon for Cuban players to be accused in the newspapers of having "laid down" or having "thrown" games.

The Cuban, by nature, loves intrigue and is always delighted to talk about it. If a player has a bad day on the diamond, the writers, in the heat of excitement, immediately figure that he must be playing badly so as to get transferred to some other club. As a matter of fact, though, the Cuban players as a rule are honest in their efforts and do the best they can. Things said in excitement are quickly forgotten down there. When one of the writers is reminded of some scathing remark made the day before, he will smile, throw up his hands—they are very strong for throwing up their hands or waving their arms on the slightest provocation—and say: "Well, what could I say? Was I not furious at the time?"

When the Cuban championship games are over, the three clubs amalgamate and put out a team to beat all comers from the United States. They have had the Detroit Tigers, the Cincinnati Reds, the New York Giants, the Phillies and the Athletics there during the Winter months and against these clubs have made surprisingly good records. The only clubs that have beaten them steadily are the Giants and the Athletics. When the Tigers were American League champions they went down to Havana and were badly beaten in a series of twelve games by the Almendares. Mendez, a Cuban pitcher, shut the Tigers out for ten innings without a hit and, mind you, the mighty Ty Cobb and Sam Crawford were batting against him.

Manager McGraw of the Giants, upon his visit to Cuba in 1911, declared that he would give $50,000 for Mendez if he were only a white man. Negroes are not permitted to play in the American and National Leagues. Mendez, however, has pitched his arm out and is now a back number. He was carried away with the Cuban love for a hero, and wore his arm out by trying to pitch every other day.

THE PITCHERS' BATTLE BETWEEN MATTY AND "THE BLACK DIAMOND"

PERHAPS the greatest baseball battle ever fought out in Cuba was between the Giants and the Almendares, with Mendez and Mathewson as the opposing pitchers. Mendez is known throughout the Antilles as the Black Diamond and also the Black Mathewson. On the day of this now historical game the papers carried the pictures of the two pitchers on their front pages, and the ball park, which seats about 17,000, overflowed with fans. The Cubans bet heavily on Mendez, the American residents pinning their faith and bank-rolls on Mathewson. Even the players took a hand in the betting, and several of the Giants won considerable money.

It was a wonderful battle; but Mathewson's calm, deliberate tactics soon told on the excitable Cuban star, and he was defeated by a close score. Mendez had terrific speed but was not accustomed to playing the game as if it were a checker board, with every move having an effect on the final result. When it was all over and the Black

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Diamond had failed to achieve his great ambition of defeating Mathewson, the Old Master, he broke down and wept like a child. He was carried from the field weeping hysterically.

"I almost wished he had won," said Mathewson in discussing the game. "A victory would have meant much to him, while it really meant little to me. Of course we played them as hard as we knew how, for if we had let up and he had won in that way, the victory would have been a hollow one, and he would have known it."

That remark of Mathewson's is a very good illustration of the difference between the viewpoints of the American player and the Cuban. Baseball with Matty is purely a business matter, and the loss of an exhibition game to him is a trifling circumstance. Frequently he has been beaten in Spring practise games in the South, and looks upon it as a good joke. On the other hand, a victory for Mendez would have meant the chance of being a hero, and basking in the plaudits and admiring glances of the Cuban people as he walked down the Prado with chest expanded. That game seemed to take several years from the life of Mendez. He was never so good thereafter.

The Cuban baseball hero in a way has taken the place of the mateador, who formerly lived on the plaudits of his admirers. With bull-fighting a thing of the past, the mateador has moved on to Mexico and Spain and the star baseball player has taken his place.

Though the Cubans do not play baseball quite so scientifically or with the same machine-like precision as the professionals do in America, nevertheless they have sent many good players to the big leagues. Among these are Marsans and Almeida of the Cincinnati Reds; Jacinto Calvo and Acosta, of the Washington team, and Gonzales of the Boston Braves.

Over in Long Branch, N. J., which is in the New York and New Jersey League, the team is made up entirely of Cubans. It is probably the only non-English speaking baseball club in America. And it is the most successful club in the league! One of their players, Tomas Calvo, was a member of the Boston Red Sox, but on account of his inability to speak English, asked permission to play the season with Long Branch so that he could be with his own countrymen and gradually pick up American ways.

While baseball is a money making institution in Cuba, just as in the United States, the players and the fans look on it in the same intensely partizan way that a college boy does football. An amateur game will create enough excitement to keep the baseball writers in "copy" for a week.

WHERE THE CUBAN HAS IT ON THE AMERICAN FAN

THE Cuban fan, by the way, understands the fine points of the game much better than does the American enthusiast. In the games that I witnessed last Winter, it was plain that the spectators were following every move on the diamond, and if a player failed to get his cue for an inside play, hoarse shouts would notify him of his shortcomings. The American fan, as a rule, does not see those things. He knows when the ball is hit, when a base is stolen or when a fine catch is made, but the so-called "inside stuff" is lost on him.

The Cubans have another custom that is unique to an American. They are strong in their likes and dislikes of the individual players. Certain players are made heroes of every time they come to bat while those who do not like them will suddenly break into the applause with a yell for their favorite. This keeps up throughout the game. At first the custom is very puzzling to the American who can not speak Spanish.

As was suggested before, the baseball fever in Cuba is not confined to those who follow the professional games. In the Army and the Navy down there our national pastime has become what might be called a menace.

Last year the maneuvers held near Santiago de Cuba came near being unsuccessful for no other reason than that the officers were stricken with the baseball fever in its most malignant form. Every war vessel in the Cuban Navy has a baseball team, as does every regiment in the Army. In distributing the naval and land forces around to points of vantage for the sham battles, the officers had the championship games very much in mind. So eager were they for closely-fought games and regimental championships that their war judgment became somewhat warped.

On the diamond at Santiago a game was to be played between the crack teams

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of the Army and Navy for the championship. The enthusiastic officers became so interested that orders were flying all over the Island transferring good players from certain companies of infantry to others so as to get together a strong club to represent the Army. Throughout the Navy there was the same activity. The shifting of men and interchange of orders reached such proportions that the maneuvers were almost forgotten and the heads of the departments in Havana had to put a stop to it. Down in Cuba to this day they laugh and tell you about how the mimic war between land and sea forces came near being decided on the diamond.

"GAME CALLED—CANNON-BALLS"

IN THIS connection I am reminded of the fact that Cuba boasts of the only ball game in the world that was ever postponed on account of artillery. Understand you, baseball was a popular sport in Cuba long before the Spanish-American War, and when the Cubans began recruiting regiments for that fight, many of the officers and men were drafted from the baseball teams. As battles do not run on schedule time, even in Cuba, the athletic soldiers did not let their duty to the Government interfere with their keeping in shape for the coming baseball series.

Victor Munoz, Rafael and Pepe Conte and Emilio Jiminez are responsible for the story of the interrupted game, but it is best told by Gonzales, an outfielder, who took part in the memorable affair.

"We had been expecting an attack of some kind for several days" says Gonzales. "But as it seemed a little slow we decided to have a ball game on Sunday morning. The ball grounds were about midway between the two armies. Back of the park and to my back—I was playing right field—was a high hill.

"In the excitement of the game we had forgotten all about the war. The fact that a big section of the Spanish forces was encamped near the sea, a mile or two from where we played ball, meant nothing to us as we chased long line drives and went to bat, each time hoping to hit the ball on the nose. (Gonzales didn't tell this exactly as I'm trying to write it. If a verbatim report should be made, nobody—not even myself—could understand it. One can not put the Cuban hand and arm movement on paper, and it was through that means that I finally understood the story.)

"I was standing in right field," went on Gonzales. "It was the fifth inning and I was getting a little tired waiting for a fly to come my way. In fact I was thinking of what chance I had of getting on the Almendares team the next season when, all of a sudden, I saw a commotion around the plate. The catcher, the umpire and the batter were talking with their faces close together and wildly gesticulating. I thought it was some argument over a strike or ball and did not move from my position.

"Suddenly I saw the umpire pick up his mask and run around the corner of the stand. The catcher and the batter quickly followed. Then I noticed the infielders starting in pursuit. It occurred to me by this time that I had better investigate. A glance around the field showed me that both the center and left fielder had disappeared. I was alone!

"As the short-stop turned the corner of the stand he waved at me and I ran up toward the plate. Two of the players were still in sight in the distance, and as I reached the plate they yelled at me and pointed toward the hill at my back. I turned just in time to see a puff of smoke, and then feel the vibration from a cannon-shot. There on the top of the hill was lined up a whole battalion of Spanish artillery! Infantrymen were hurrying to join it.

"Right then and there," declared Gonzales with emphasis, "I did the best running baseball has ever known. With cannon-balls whistling overhead I did one hundred yards in what you Americans would call 'nothing.'

"We reached the Cuban lines safely and were on the march for two or three days. It was the beginning of the series of running fights that finally wound up in American occupation."

Gonzales insists, and I agree with him, that was the first and only ball game broken up by artillery!

WHY MENDEZ WASN'T SHOT

IT IS unlikely that many of our American baseball fans have heard the story of how Mendez, the great Cuban pitcher, was saved from a military execution on account of the pride the country felt in his success

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as a diamond star. Whether they have or not, it has enough bearing on the baseball feeling in Cuba to be worth printing.

They have in Cuba an organization called the *Partido Independiente de Color*, the purpose of which is to see that the blacks get the same rights and privileges as the whites. Mendez, a coal-black negro, being loyal to his race, joined the organization. Two years ago this *Partido Independiente de Color* was largely responsible for a small insurrection that started with the uprising of the blacks. The *rurales* captured many of these negroes, who were regarded as guerillas and outlaws, and were promptly executed under military law. While this insurrection was in progress it was announced that the Philadelphia Athletics were to visit Cuba for a series of ball games. It was an open question as to which deserved more publicity, the Athletics or the insurrectos.

At any rate, Mendez, the great pitcher who had taken the field with the black insurrectos, was captured by the *rurales* and was lined up with a lot of prisoners that were in danger of being shot.

In sentencing the blacks one of the officers recognized Mendez and waved him aside. When the other prisoners had been disposed of, Mendez was ordered to get out as quickly as possible.

"If we have you shot," asked the Captain in command, "who will pitch against the Athletics?"

Mendez, having been freed, went back to Havana and pitched several games against the Americans. He won one game; but his indulgence in the sweets as well as the bitters of life had told heavily upon him, and in the other games he met defeat.

HOW THE GIANTS BECAME POPULAR

ANOTHER trait that distinguishes the Cuban from his American brother is the trifling details that will turn him for or against a club, whether the team be a visitor or a local organization. This is particularly applicable to his support of the American teams that visit the Island. The New York Giants drew larger crowds than any American club that ever played in Cuba—not because they played the best ball, but on account of the personal characteristics of the men.

On the morning of the Giants' arrival Manager McGraw, who has a wonderful mind for detail, noticed that his men were not dressed as were the Cubans. He immediately figured that the Cubans, who appeared so picturesque to us, must have a real reason for wearing white clothes and the usual raiment of the tropics. In other words, he became obsessed with the idea that if his men adopted the Cuban style of dress while off the diamond they would be more comfortable and consequently in better physical shape for baseball.

Rafael Conte, the writer, who was educated at Harvard and who speaks English as well as an American, was asked to call on the Giants' manager. McGraw talked with him at some length about the kind of clothes to wear and asked for the address of a tailor. In two days the Giants appeared dressed exactly like the Cubans, from Panama hat to canvas shoes.

On the streets they were quickly noticed by the natives and became immensely popular, not because McGraw had decided to make his men comfortable, but because the Cubans thought he was adopting their customs!

This move on McGraw's part turned out to be a rare stroke of diplomacy. The players were cheered everywhere they went and they drew big crowds to the ball park throughout their stay. Other clubs did not adopt the Cuban style of dress nor the Cuban ways, and went away wondering why they did not make so much money.

It is the ultimate ambition of the Cubans to have one of their teams entered in a series of games for the championship of the world. They seriously maintain that no American team has the right to be called world's champions until it beats the best teams of Havana. The Cubans may have the players and the science but their method of organization is so different and their way of thinking about such things is so diametrically opposed to the conservative, business-like American system, that it is doubtful if such a series can ever be possible.

The American player is quite content to play through a season of six months so that his team can win a league pennant and be eligible to take part in a world's series, but the Cuban wants his part of it settled in a jiffy. Long preparations he can not endure. As one of them said on the eve of our departure for the States, "Are not our pride in and loyalty to Cuba sufficient?"

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THE RING

by W. TOWNEND

CHAPTER I

THE FIGHT FOR THE RING

AT FIRST the hoarse, snarling voice seemed no more than part of his dream; less real than the bleating of sheep in the meadows and the cawing of rooks.

"Markham, wake up!"

Sleep vanished. Markham, groping in his mind for time and place, heard the beat of the engines and the growl of the wind, yawned and stretched his arms upward.

"All right! I'll be ready in just a minute. Still blowing, eh?"

A hand grasped his shoulder firmly and shook him to and fro.

"I want to speak to you," said the voice. "Wake up!"

Markham wrenched himself free.

"What the deuce are you doin,' you——"

He broke off and gazed in open-mouthed amazement, not at some deck hand, but at the mate, who stood by the side of his bunk, holding on as the vessel rolled.

"Lockwood!" said Markham with a sharp catch of his breath. "What is it?"

Fear of disaster, that the *City of Gloucester* might be foundering, spurred him into action. Throwing off his blankets, he reached for his trousers and slid to the floor of the small, untidy room.

"Anything wrong on deck?" he asked, stooping for his shoes.

"Wrong!" sneered the mate, thrusting his flushed, wet face close to Markham. "No, Mister Second Mate, there's nothin' wrong on deck. An' what business is it o' yours if there is?"

The ship rolled to starboard and Markham, steadying himself against the bureau, looked at the clock hanging from a nail and saw that it was half past three.

"What do ye want here then, at this time o' night?" Markham asked. "Eh?"

"She's writin' you letters," said the mate with sudden fierceness. "Can ye deny it? You'll pay heavy for them letters, ye white-faced little dock rat."

He gave an ugly laugh. Markham smelt the whisky and shivered.

"You'll pay this very night! Years before ever you come creepin' around, the girl an' me were sweethearts. She's mine, you understand! An' you'll own as much, Mister Second Mate, before I leave this room. This thing 'ull be settled to-night one way or the other."

"Aye, we'll settle," scoffed Markham. "Me an' you will settle; no doubt! With the lass seven thousan' mile away on Tyneside! Will she abide by our settlin' anything? The lass is goin' to marry me, an' that's all we'll settle if we stay here arguin' till the crack o' doom."

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All at once the mate laughed and stretched out his clenched fist.

"Ye see my rings, Markham, don't ye? Nice rings, ain't they?"

Markham gazed at the two gold rings in wondering silence.

"I've a weakness for rings, haven't I? Look then! Look at what I've got now!"

He opened his hand and uncovered a tiny ring of beaten silver in which were set two small opals and a blood-red ruby.

AT THE sight of this other ring Markham sprang forward, raving, but the mate fended him off with his forearm.

"You thief, Lockwood, you stole it out of my coat there! It's mine! Give it up!"

He snatched at the ring, but the mate's fist shot out and sent him down in a limp heap on the floor.

"She's goin' to marry you, is she? Let me tell you, Mister Markham, she'll no' marry a poor, good-for-nothin', weak-kneed puppy like you!"

Stunned by the fall Markham sat huddled in a corner near the door. The mate dropped the ring into a small leather purse which he fastened and stuffed into a trouser pocket.

"There!" he said, chuckling. "Who does the ring belong to now? You or me, eh?"

Markham scrambled to his feet.

"Lockwood," he said.

The vessel lurched violently and he clutched at the handle of the door.

"Lockwood, you'll no' leave this room till I've got my ring. It's mine. She gave it me, an' you're a drunken pickpocket, riflin' another man's clothes."

The mate was glaring at him with hate in his bloodshot eyes.

"You'll no' let me leave the room, eh?" said he thickly. "We'll see about that."

And he jumped at Markham, hitting fiercely. Markham ducked but was rushed back against the door, which swung open. The next moment he was out on the slippery, heaving deck, giving way under the mate's savage half arm body blows.

And then the *City of Gloucester* heeled far over to starboard, very slowly. As they slid downward against the rails, Markham lashed out with all his strength. He felt his fist crash into soft, yielding flesh, heard Lockwood shriek, and a vast, foam-flecked mass of water swept over him.

There was a loud roaring noise in his ears; sparks of light flashed before his eyes; something beat against his head. He tried to struggle.

CHAPTER II

"SUGIYAMA NO TELL"

WHEN he came to himself he was lying on the settee in his own room, blinking at the swinging oil lamp, wet to the skin, shivering with cold and very sick.

One of the Japanese deck hands, a square-shouldered, thick-set man dressed in glistening yellow oilskins and sou'wester, stood by the bureau.

Markham watched him, wondering stupidly what had happened. He uttered a little groan and raised himself to a sitting position.

The Jap turned to Markham with an uneasy, tight-lipped smile.

"You bet'r, sare?" he asked.

"The ring!" whispered Markham. "The ring's gone. Where is it?"

The room was badly lighted. The quick-changing shadows cast by the lamp made it difficult to see things clearly, but it seemed to Markham that a look of terror had frozen on the Jap's face.

They stared at each other in silence.

"You rost a reeng, sare?" said the Jap. "What reeng?"

"Mine," said Markham. "Mine, of course."

And with a weak cry he stood upright and staggered to the door.

"Where's Lockwood? Where's he got to?"

The Jap grabbed him by the arm and shook his head. Markham seated himself once more and covered his face with his hands.

"My Heaven!" he said under his breath. "Oh, my Heaven!"

"I come rong deck," said the Jap. "Meester Rockwood, he go e-er over rail. You heet heem, an' he e-er dead. T'at all."

Markham gazed at the Jap with the hopelessness of despair. Lockwood was dead and he had killed him.

When he next spoke he did not recognize his own voice.

"All right!" he said. "It's one bell, eh?"

"One bell, sare," said the Jap. "Yes, sare."

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"I'll tell them as quick as I can," said Markham in a dull, level tone. "I must."

"Why you er-tell, eh?" murmured the Jap. There was a short pause. "I no speak. What e-er good to tell; eh?"

A feeling of pity for himself came over Markham.

"I didn't mean to do it," he whispered. "I swear I didn't. He tried to kill me, and we fought."

The seaman's broad, flat-cheeked face was like some carven yellow mask under the brim of the sou'wester; good natured and simple and friendly.

"Meester Rockwood, he e-er try to keell you. No one see you o'ly me. Sugiyama my name. I no tell."

"All right," said Markham quivering. "All right. I'll—I'll make it all right with you later."

The Jap opened the door and disappeared into the night.

AT EIGHT bells Markham climbed the bridge ladder to take the morning watch.

"Hullo, Markham!" said the third mate cheerfully. "Any one 'ud think you was only half awake. Rotten wet night it's been, too. Thank the Lord the glass is risin' at last!"

Markham put his pipe into his mouth and struck a match.

"Hope we get some—some clear weather before we make San Diego," he said, and held the match between his hands, screening the blaze from the wind.

"Good Lord!" said the third mate suddenly. "What 'uv you been doin' with yer face? It's all bruised an' swollen."

Markham's hands shook. "What's that?" he said. "All bruised, eh? That's nothing, Davidson. I—I fell an' hurt myself, that's all."

"Looks pretty bad, all the same. Well, glad it ain't my face. I'm goin' to turn in now. Sou'east by a half east."

"Sou'east by a half east it is," said Markham.

DURING the four hours' watch, through the blackness of a wild night to the gray dawn of a cheerless December day, Markham suffered an eternity of misery and doubt and fear.

Lockwood was dead, and he had killed him. When he whispered it to himself, it seemed impossible. And yet it was true. He had killed a man with his own hands. That he had not meant to kill made little difference. He shivered, wondering how many poor wretches had swung at Newgate for killing as innocently as he had killed.

And then with a thrill of horror Markham remembered the fight—the darkness, the slippery, tilting deck, the howl of the wind, the crash of the heavy seas, the savage blows, the dying shriek of the man he hated. For he knew now that he had hated Lockwood even as Lockwood had hated him. More so, perhaps, because he had never shown his hatred. Once he had tried to be friendly, but friendship had been impossible.

And the cause? Markham thought of the lost ring and the girl on Tyneside—a small, dark-haired girl with gray eyes, who had dared to tell Lockwood the truth. And Markham knew that because he had killed Lockwood he could never, never go back to the girl on Tyneside.

ONE bell rang out sharply in the clear morning air. Markham gritted his teeth and waited for what would happen, staring down at the pale green sea swirling by, flecked with a lather of creamy foam, rising and falling in great hills and hollows.

On the bridge deck two of the seamen were talking excitedly in their own tongue. Footsteps clattered up the iron ladder and Markham found the small bos'un at his elbow.

"Well, Yamida," he said. "What is it?"

"Meester Rockwood, sare. He no in er-hees room. No int' er-cabin, sare."

"What's that?" said Markham. "Not in his room? Nonsense, man; he must be."

He frowned.

"Better go an' tell the steward, an' then, if you're certain you've looked everywhere, tell the Captain an' Mr. Davidson. Make haste, now!"

Markham paced to and fro, his head bent, his hands clasped behind his back.

Five minutes later the Captain was on the bridge.

"This is terrible about poor Lockwood. Terrible. Markham, I'm afraid—aye, I'm afraid that the poor chap's been washed overboard. An' what's more, there's an empty bottle o' whisky in his room, an' one half empty. He must have been drinkin' again."

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CHAPTER III

MORE TROUBLE

FOR two days Markham lived in a kind of stupor, paying little attention to anything outside the routine of his duty. And then, on the afternoon of the third day after Lockwood's death, a Sunday, there came the trouble in the fo'c's'le.

Four bells had just struck, the man at the wheel had been relieved, and Markham leaned over the side of the bridge staring dreamily with unseeing eyes across the stretch of sunlit water.

In his mind was the picture of Lockwood, laughing and sneering, standing by the bureau with the light of the oil lamp shining on his clenched fist. And he saw once again the fingers with the heavy gold rings slowly relax and show the other ring—the little silver ring in which were set the two small opals and the ruby.

A sudden yell from the bow of the ship brought him from the past back into the grim reality of the present.

He turned swiftly to see one of the crew dash madly out of the fo'c's'le and slide down the ladder on to the well-deck. Sugiyama followed hard at his heels. The Japs crowded on to the fo'c's'le head jabbering.

"What the deuce are you two men doin'?" shouted Markham. "You—stop that at once! Sugiyama, you drop that knife!"

The first man, his face a sickly gray, kept on his way, and Markham heard his feet clattering aft along the bridge deck. But Sugiyama halted.

"What are you doin' with that knife, you fool?" said Markham. "Drop it at once, d'you understand! Drop it!"

With a shrug of his shoulders the Jap let the knife fall on the iron deck plates.

"Now get along for'ard!" snapped Markham. "I'll log you for this. Understand! An' if there's any more of it, you'll go into irons."

Sugiyama shrugged his shoulders once more, laughed and walked slowly away.

"Bos'un," said Markham. "Come here and throw that knife overboard, please!"

And when the knife had flashed into the sea, he nodded.

"Much obliged. If that man gives any trouble, let me know of it."

He spoke carelessly as one who thought nothing of dealing with seamen who fought with knives. Nevertheless Sugiyama's grim little laugh and the scorn in his eyes had unsettled him. He crossed to the other side of the bridge and only then did he realize that his hands were trembling and that the sweat was trickling down his face.

AT FOUR o'clock Davidson came up to take the first dog watch.

"More trouble," said Markham after a time.

"What's up now?" said Davidson.

"Nothin' in partic'lar. Thatbig Jap quartermaster, Sugiyama, tried to knife one of the firemen. Chased him out of the fo'c's'le."

"Pretty rotten that, isn't it?" said the second mate.

"Pretty rotten!" said Markham. "It's an everlastin' disgrace. Fancy havin' a crowd like that on a British ship!"

The second mate yawned.

"That's just it. They're cheap. That's why those owners of ours sign 'em on."

"I'll be movin' now," said Markham. "Got to write some letters."

He gave the course and climbed down the ladder. Later on, although it was only three bells, he returned to the bridge while the second mate went to his tea. Sugiyama, who was at the wheel, scowled sullenly.

"Why were you fightin' this afternoon?" said Markham after a minute or two.

"He try to keell me," said the Jap roughly. "T'at hees knife you t'row er-overboar'. I take eet er-from heem."

He smiled and dropped the heavy lids over his eyes.

"What was it all about?" said Markham.

"Oh! he er-owe me money. No er-pay. No mosh money on boar' er-sheep."

"You won't want any money in San Diego," said Markham, forcing a smile. "They won't let you go on shore."

"No er-go on shore, eh?" said the Jap. "No want money, eh? You er-remember t'at er-day Meester Rockwood tell you no want money to e-er spen' when dead, eh? Ver' fonny man, Meester Rockwood. He dead now, eh? An' no er-got money!"

"That 'ull do," said Markham hoarsely.

CHAPTER IV

MR. BENNETT OF THE IMMIGRATION SERVICE

IT WAS on the second morning after the *City of Gloucester* arrived in San Diego Harbor that the stout Jap in the gray

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suit with the gold watch fob came on board to visit friends in the fo'c's'le.

Markham leaned on the rail amidships, watching the cargomen unloading railroad ties on to the flat cars alongside and talking to a plump, pleasant-faced little man who had introduced himself by the name of Bennett and who was, so he said, in the Immigration Service.

"An' my partic'lar job right now," he went on, "is to keep this bunch o' Japs you've gotten for a crew from wanderin' off over the U-nited States of America. I dunno 'bout the East, but there's a kinder prejudice in California against them yeller-skinned scabs. You'll excuse me callin' 'em names, won't you?"

The plump, round-faced little man spat over the rail and smiled.

"Call 'em anything you like, Mr. Bennett," said Markham. "You can't hate 'em more than I do. We've over fifty Japs aboard the *City of Gloucester*, sailin' under the red ensign, an' not six of 'em can speak English. Can ye imagine what it's like when we run into bad weather?"

Bennett threw back his head and laughed.

"Say, see them green trees down yonder?"

He pointed a stubby forefinger southward in the direction of the dark-blue hills of Mexico.

"That's Chula Vista. There's orchards there an' packin' houses an' ranches, an' though this ain't quite the busiest time o' year for lemons, things is lookin' up and I guess any Jap who came along 'ud be tolerably certain o' gettin' a job."

"Mr. Bennett," said Markham slowly, "what would happen if any of our crew managed to desert an' wasn't brought back?"

"Nothin'," said the plump, round-faced little man, "except that you'd pay the head tax, that's all. The crew have been checked in on the alien crew list, an' you've complied with all the rules an' precautions specified by law, an' you can't do no more. The rest's up to us."

On the opposite side of the ship Sugiyama trotted slowly aft.

Markham rose to his feet.

"Here you, I want to speak to you."

The Jap stopped and hesitated. Then with a slight smile he approached between the bunker hatch and the ventilators.

"What have you been doin'?" said Markham.

"Been for'd, sare; t'at's all. Just been er-for'd."

Markham's bluster died away to a querulous complaint.

"That's about eight times I've seen you walkin' along that deck this mornin'. Get back to your work at once!"

He turned to Bennett.

"There's no discipline on board this ship; we're helpless. If we punish 'em they don't do any work at all."

"We-ell!" said the Immigration Service man drily. "Somehow I didn't kinder like the way that guy looked when you spoke to him. If I'd been you I'd 'uv been inclined to have given him a smack on the jaw. Seemed like he was askin' for trouble."

The second engineer, broad-shouldered and red-headed and very solemn, strolled up, wiping his bare oily arms on a piece of cotton waste.

"Trouble!" he said. "Mon! There's been Tophet loose in the engine room all this morn. Did ye, by any chance, hear me talkin'?"

Markham gazed after Sugiyama with a feeling of uneasiness.

"FOR Heaven's sake!" said the second engineer. "Who's yon?"

A stout, prosperous-looking Jap came sauntering toward them dressed in a light gray suit with tan shoes and a soft gray hat. His sleepy black eyes glanced from side to side. He beamed with an air of conscious self-satisfaction as he reached the gangway.

"Goo' mornin'," he said. "Fine day, is it not?"

The Immigration Service man stared at him coldly and the Jap, still smiling, climbed down the steps.

"Lord!" said Markham. "Who's he?"

"That's one of 'em, after a year or so in this country. See his gold fob. Funny how they like joolry! It makes me sick, it sure does. Wonder what he's workin' at. P'r'aps he's been savin' money on a dollar seventy a day. May be he owns a truck garden. I dunno. Good old U-nited States! I never did care for Japs anyways."

"I'd rather have a row wi' a tame cobra any day than wi' a Jap," said the second engineer. "I mind in Yokohama twa year back our second mate gettin' a knife between his shoulder blades, because he'd punished ane o' the deck hands. That's

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why I'm so everlastin' polite to this crowd."

The plump little man laughed, but Markham shivered as if the warmth of the day had departed and the sun no longer shone.

THAT same night about seven o'clock he stood by the open door of the engine room, smoking and gazing at the lights of San Diego shining in the soft darkness.

Aroused by the distant tolling of an engine bell, he glanced in the direction of the bridge and saw a man make very slowly toward the gangway, hesitate for a moment and then begin to descend the steps.

Some one on the wharf gave a chuckle.

"Now then, you yeller slant-eyed son of an octopus, you just git back from them steps as quick as you can. An' don't play no fool tricks with me or this gun's terr'ble likely to go off."

"No come down for reettle piece wood, eh?" said a mild, respectful voice.

Markham tiptoed toward the dark figure at the head of the steps, straining his eyes in the pale starlight.

"Cut it out! No, you can't get no wood. You wait till mornin'. Git now, or I'll make yuh."

The Jap moved away from the rails and with no surprise Markham recognized Sugiyama.

"Don't you know they've got a lot of men watchin' the ship?" he said. "Get back for'ard an' don't try that game any more!"

"Them 'Mericans!" said the Jap. "I no' fool er-try to walk down radder, eh?"

Markham could see the flash of his teeth.

"Any time I er-want to er-go shore, I go. T'ey no' stop me, Meester Markham. See! An' you no' stop me. See, Meester Markham!"

And with this the Jap deck hand walked for'ard, leaving Markham staring after him with a cold feeling around his heart.

BY THE end of the week it had become difficult to handle the crew of the *City of Gloucester*.

"What the deuce can we do with them?" said Markham. "I call it downright cruel not to let the poor beggars go on shore. I don't wonder they won't work. We'd be as bad maybe if we were cooped up in the ship same as them."

This was on the Saturday, five days after the *City of Gloucester* had reached port.

"Listen to that!" said the second mate with a grin. "That's a queer thing for you to be sayin', Jack Markham. You've not set foot off the ship since we come alongside. You're just goin' moldy an' white-faced for want of exercise. What's been the matter with you for the last week or so, eh?"

The second engineer tucked his arm through Markham's. "Mon!" he whispered. "I've found a place whaur ye can get gude Scots whusky that micht ha' been bottled in Glasca' itself by the taste o't. Ye'll gang ashore wi' the second mate an' me this verra nicht an' ye'll no' ha' cause to regr-ret it."

Markham frowned and puckered up his lips and then very unwillingly smiled.

"All right, Mac," he said; "I'll go, but I don't want to, all the same."

"Beg pardon, sare."

Markham found himself looking into Sugiyami's grave, yellow face with the high cheek bones and dark, scornful eyes.

"Well," he said. "What d'you want?"

"Prease, sare, you er-want me er-over side paintin'?"

The Jap spoke with even more hesitation than usual.

"Yes, of course I do," growled Markham. "An' tell the bos'un I'd like to see him at once—if you please," he added, and felt the color rising to his cheeks.

THE afternoon turned cold and gray. By half-past four a wet, white blanket of fog had rolled in from the Pacific.

On the after deck Markham stood by the side of one of the stevedores, a huge, red-faced man, and watched the ties being hoisted out of hold in slings.

The tackle began to slip; the bundle of ties swung round and round, and tilted upward.

"Hold her!" shrieked the fat man, raising his hands. But at that instant there was a wild outburst from the wharf.

"Hey! Look at that Jap beatin' it down the track there! Look at him!"

Markham raced up the ladder on to the bridge deck.

The cargomen were standing on the flat cars howling joyfully. The winches had ceased working. The crew of the *City of Gloucester* lined the rails peering into the fog.

Markham pushed between the second mate and the second engineer.

"Who is it?" he said.

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"Stop, or I'll shoot!" yelled a voice. "Stop! You hear me?" And the *bang! bang! bang!* of a revolver followed.

"Hope that Immigration Service blighter isn't goin' to kill off all our crew!" said the second mate. "We want the man, not a bally corpse."

"He won't shoot him," said the fat stevedore. "Bennett's a good old scout, but he's no hand with a gun. If he does wing yer Jap, believe muh, it 'ull be all on account of his tryin' to miss. Guess he's gotten him though by now. Durn this fog!"

"What's that?" said Markham quickly. "Listen!"

"He's bringin' him back," shouted a man on the wharf. "The guy stopped an' he caught him."

Some minutes later the small, plump Immigration Service man, breathing heavily, climbed the ladder at the heels of a very much disheveled, dejected-looking Jap.

"It's one of the firemen," said the second engineer. "I thought so."

"Slid down the mooring ropes, did he!" said the second mate. "Why didn't he walk down the ladder and have done with it? Or ask leave to visit his grandmother in San Diego? Lord! I always thought Japs were fools. Now I know it."

"I dunno," said the Immigration Service man, cutting off a chunk of tobacco and stuffing it into his mouth. "Maybe they ain't such fools as yuh thinks. That's only the first. I guess I'll wait an' see how many more try an' break for the shore. They will, o' course, don't yuh make any mistake about that."

CHAPTER V

SUGIYAMA GETS WET

AFTER tea, as the second engineer, the second mate and Markham were walking down the long wharf, they were halted by two men who stood between the railroad tracks.

"Sorry, boys," said the shorter man of the pair, "but I must ask if you've anything to declare. Customs."

They shook their heads.

"Except," said the second engineer in a husky tone, "that I've an awfoo' thairst on me. Ye'll no stop me for that, though, will ye? It's a complaint of a' the MacLachlans."

"You're lucky," said the customs officer. "I guess you'll find yer partic'lar remedy ashore all right. So long. An' don't do anything I wouldn't do, will you?"

"Lord!" said Markham, "if any of them Japs get away from the ship they'll be clever."

The night was warm and very still. A high fog hid the stars, but the arc lamps shone out brilliantly against the black mass of the city. From afar off came the *clang-clang* of a trolley car. The water lapped gently against the piles of the wharf. A steamer hooted mournfully at the entrance to the Bay.

"An' this," said the second engineer, "is December of a' months! Puir chaps! Whaur's the satisfaction in ha'in' this weather a' the year roond?"

They followed the track between huge towering stacks of Oregon pine and redwood—solid walls, broken here and there by gaps, empty spaces that opened like narrow doorways.

"There's some water fronts where I wouldn't care to be walkin' around after dark like this," said the second mate, and as he spoke Markham caught the faint sound of something stirring between the piles of lumber. His heart gave a sudden upward heave and he halted, listening intently, filled with an unreasoning panic.

A hand gripped him firmly by the arm and a low voice hissed in his ear.

"S'sh! Meester Markham, you stop! I speak wit' you."

Fear silenced the words that rose to Markham's lips. His heart stopped beating. A cold sweat stood on his forehead. For he knew that the man who held him by the arm was Sugiyama.

"Come along, Markham!" shouted the second engineer. "Dinna be a' nicht!"

Markham tugged at his arm, but with no thought of disobedience. "Let me go, you fool! I'll have to speak to them. I'll come back."

"Markham, what the deuce are you doin'?" called the second mate. "What's up?"

"I'm not—not feelin' very well. My head aches."

Markham cleared his throat.

"Went dizzy back there a minute ago. Nearly fell. Dunno why. Look here, I don't think I'll go ashore after all."

"Mon," said the second engineer. "I'm

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awfoo' sorry. We'll see you back aboard ship, o' course."

"No," said Markham. "That's not necessary. I'm much better now. But—I'll wait till some other time. I've been queer all day."

They spoke together for a few moments and then Markham turned and retraced his steps to where the Jap waited between the stacks of lumber.

"You help me, Meester Markham. See! Or I tell t'em how I see you er-keell Meester Rockwood. You un'stan'!"

"Well," said Markham. "What do you want me to do?"

The thought of his own weakness angered him; and with anger came caution.

"We can't stop here," he whispered. "Come!"

TOGETHER they made their way through the lumber yard until they had passed the big sawmill and reached an open grassy space on the other side of the railroad.

"Now," said Markham. "What is it?"

The Jap fumbled in the pocket of his jumper. "You go er-t'ere," he said, and thrust a moist, crumpled scrap of paper into Markham's hand. "Go t'ere. A man, he geeve you horse an' wagon. See! T'en you er-drive me 'way—er-over t'ere."

He waved his hand south toward Mexico.

"My frien', he come on board t'at mornin'; he er-tell me how I get horse an' wagon. See! He er-tell me where I go for job."

"What would you have done if I hadn't been here?" said Markham.

"To-day I hear you say you go er-shore. If I no hear t'at, t'en by 'm by . . . some day, to-morr' maybe, I er-tell you I reave ter sheep, an' t'en you er-help."

Markham gave a little shrug.

"I understand. Simple, isn't it?" And he walked off very quickly, sick with shame at the thought of what he was doing.

On the scrap of paper that the Jap had given him was the name of a street and a number; also a few words in Japanese characters. The house itself, a small cottage with a withered vine hanging from the roof, stood on a corner some distance apart from any other house, near the gas works.

Markham knocked at the door twice before he heard the shuffling of feet.

"Who t'ere?" said a faint, wheezing voice. "Wha' you want?"

"I'd like to speak to you," said Markham. "I've brought a letter."

After a moment's silence a key grated in the lock, the door was opened, and Markham forced his way into the house, past a small, bent man who held a lamp and who tried to keep him out.

"Wha' you want?" he said.

Markham stared at an old Jap whose dark eyes blinked at him from a face like a wrinkled, wizened walnut.

"Read this," said Markham. "And I want a horse and wagon."

When he had read what was written on the paper the Jap nodded and gazed at Markham over the rims of his glasses.

"You want horse, eh? Aw' ri'. I geeve heem."

They went out into a back yard where by the light from the street Markham saw a shed and a broken down wagon with a red and white umbrella raised over the driver's seat.

The pony was white and to Markham's eyes incredibly thin and aged, like its owner.

"I s'pose it 'ull do," he grumbled, as he helped the Jap back the animal into the shafts, "but I wish we'd something better."

"Aw' ri,' eh?" said the Jap, when he had lit the lamps on his wagon.

Markham nodded. "I dunno when I'll be back."

The old man clutched at his coat with a claw-like hand. "You pay," he wheezed.

"Pay!" said Markham.

"Ten dol'r," said the Jap. "Ten. An' no make so er-mosh noise, 'ress people say wha' you er-do so rate at night wit' wagon."

"Ten dollars!"

Markham swore savagely under his breath. "I'll be blamed if I do."

The Jap said nothing, but smiled like some old, old idol come to life, and Markham swallowed his wrath and paid the money. Then, having torn down the red and white umbrella, he drove out of the gate into the street.

He reached the railway and pulled up opposite the lumber yard. Sugiyama strolled up from the shadow of a stack of ties and climbed into the wagon.

"Aw' ri," he said in an offhand tone, and Markham jerked at the reins.

"Giddup, hoss!"

His hand brushed against Sugiyama's sleeve. "Good Lord! you're all wet!"

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"Wet!" said the Jap with his teeth chattering. "Oh-a yes! How you t'eenk I reave ter sheep, eh? 'Member how Ito try to er-get away, eh? Aw' ter crowd, ev'rybody rook at heem, eh? Only me, I drop over ter ot'er side on to prank where I paint into er-water. See! T'en I sweem to wharf, an' wait, all under water 'cep nose, till it er-come dark. T'en I go 'shore, see? Wet! Course I get wet. Ito no fool quite. If he no able to get crear, I do. See!"

CHAPTER VI

MARKHAM BECOMES HUMOROUS

AFTER it was all over Markham could recall the long, weary drive only as some nightmare; a nightmare in which he journeyed on a never ending road that stretched south across brush-covered flats, through a small town of quiet streets bordered by eucalyptus trees and on again across a valley, the mouth of a wide, dried-up river, with the salt of the sea in his nostrils and the night breeze from the mountains singing in the wires overhead.

Once a man on horseback rode beside the wagon and Markham in a sudden terror lashed at the white pony.

"Hello there!" said the man. "What's yer hurry?"

And again as they climbed slowly to the crest of the slope between the lemon orchards on the far side of the valley, a square shouldered, burly man with a roll of blankets on his back strode toward them asking for a ride.

Once more Markham used his whip.

"Giddup!" he said through his teeth. "Giddup!"

The man with the blankets broke into a shuffling run.

"Hey, hold hard a minute, you pikers! Let me up! I'm comin' wit' youse." He clutched at the wagon.

Bending sideways the Jap slammed his fist into the man's jaw.

"Good work!" said Markham.

He looked over his shoulder and saw the man seated in the middle of the road, a black mass against the gray.

At the crossroads five hundred yards farther on Markham pulled up.

"We've left a pretty easy trail to follow," he grunted. "Which way do you want me to go now? I suppose you don't know no more than I do, really."

"I know," growled the Jap. "By'm by you see. S'pose you go up t'ere."

Markham turned the pony's head obediently.

After a few minutes he broke into a roar of jangling laughter.

"Funny, isn't it? First officer of a British ship helping one of the deck hands desert! I ought to be proud of myself . . . but I'm not. That's funnier still."

They drove on under spreading pepper trees that lined the orchards on either hand, and then once more Markham turned the pony's head.

"May as well," he said, "because it seems to me it makes bloomin' little difference now where we go. We're here an' that's all, an' we'll keep on drivin' around all night unless you ask some one the way."

The road dipped into a dark hollow, screened by cedars and eucalyptus, with the lights of Chula Vista showing through the trees.

"Which way now?" said Markham, reining in.

THE Jap clutched at his hand.

"S'sh!" he whispered.

Markham could make out a man approaching them from the direction of the Bay. "You speak," said the Jap. "Ask heem how far First Street. See! T'en I er-know."

"I beg your pardon," began Markham as the man drew near, "but could you tell me——" By the dim light cast by the wagon lamps he saw that the newcomer was another Jap.

"T'at aw' ri'," said Sugiyama. "T'at aw' ri.' I speak myself."

He jumped down on to the road and Markham listened uneasily to the low whispering of the Japs.

"Meester Markham," said Sugiyama, "you er-go home now. See! I find ev'ry-t'ing. P'r'aps I no see you again. Good-by, sare. I t'ink of you often. P'r'aps some day I er-write you a retter, eh? Write you retter about Meester Rockwood."

He laughed silently and moved off.

"Goo'-by, Meester Markham."

With an overpowering rush of happiness that left him dazed and dizzy, Markham watched the Japs disappear into the darkness. And he knew then as their footsteps

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died away that never again would he see Sugiyama. The dread of discovery that had been with him for so long had departed. And only at that instant did he realize the horror of what he had gone through.

After a time he came to himself with a shiver and remembered that he was many miles from the *City of Gloucester*.

"Giddup, hoss!" he said; "giddup!" and headed the white pony toward San Diego.

IT WAS late when he drove up to the cottage by the gas works. The old Jap opened the gate and Markham clambered down from the wagon very stiffly.

"You do wha' you er-want, eh?" wheezed the Jap, clawing at his arm. "Eh? You do wha' you want?"

"Yes," said Markham.

"Where you er-go now, eh?"

Markham frowned.

"I don't see quite that it matters to you," he growled. "Ten dollars is all I want to pay. Understand! I'm goin' home."

He went back to the ship by a roundabout way, halting occasionally at corners and looking back cautiously to see if he were followed.

"Had a good time, Mr. Mate?" said the customs officer.

"Yes," said Markham. "Nice little town, San Diego, don't you think?"

"You betcher. An' not so little, neither."

"Any excitement to-night?" asked Markham nervously.

"Not on your life!" said the other. "Dead as Los Angeles Harbor. Say, your friends went aboard about twenty minutes ago. They seemed happy too, by the looks of 'em. I said you was still ashore."

Markham gave a gulp of despair. "They got back, did they? That's good. Well, I'll have to be doin' the same."

He said good-night and climbed slowly up the steps leading to the bridge deck of the *City of Gloucester*.

CHAPTER VII

MARKHAM HAS A REVERSAL OF FEELING

NEXT morning, as Markham was smoking an after breakfast pipe seated on the rail amidships, the second mate came up hurriedly, his face very pink and his eyes full of mystery.

"Markham," he began, "have you heard the news? You haven't, have you? That big quartermaster, Sugiyama, has gone!"

"Gone! What's that, Davidson?" said Markham, taking the pipe out of his mouth.

"The bos'un just told me. He must have slipped over the side in the night. Lord! The old man's ravin'. Says we'll go to sea with the fo'c's'le half empty. Fat lot *he* knows about it!"

The plump, round-faced Immigration Service man came on board. Said he, rubbing his chin:

"I'm no dolgarned prophet, but I'll be durn' surprised if we ever see Mister Man again. He speaks English, does he? That pretty nigh settles it! I guess that fat Jap in the gray suit has had something to do with this."

He grunted.

"Huh! What's he look like?"

Markham hesitated.

"He's bigger than most Japs, broader in the shoulders; he's got flat cheeks an'—an' a little black mustache, I think."

"Get out!" said the second mate. "He's got no mustache, Markham. Don't you remember him better'n that?"

" 'Fraid that don't help any," said the Immigration Service man, and he went down the steps to the wharf.

Markham, still seated on the rail, let his thoughts go back to the previous night, when he had driven the white pony south. For a long time he pondered as to what Sugiyama would have done had he refused to obey his commands.

Would he have told of the fight in the darkness, of Lockwood's death, of their talk in his room after it was all over? If he had told, would they have believed him? Would the accusations of a Japanese seaman have carried any weight against the word of an officer?

And then Markham wondered if, after all, he would have had the courage to deny what he knew to be true, and was thankful that he had seen the last of Sugiyama. For, in spite of the United States Immigration Service, Sugiyama would never again be brought back to the *City of Gloucester*. Markham felt that he could breathe freely at last.

The second engineer stood before him.

"Mon," he said, "I dinna ken noo what huppened last nicht. Whaur did ye get to? Why wouldna' ye coom ashore wi' me? Did I say ocht I'd na richt to say?"

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"Lord!" said Markham flushing. "I—I didn't feel inclined to go into the city, Mac. I wasn't well, really. I—I took a walk into the country instead."

"That's a' richt, then!" said MacLachlan. "But what's coom o'er ye to-day? Not for weeks ha' I seen ye so happy! Any one wad imagine ye'd haird of soom tremendous gude fortune."

"Perhaps I have," said Markham.

"Oh, aye!" said the second engineer. "In San Diego, California! An' no letters for twa days, eh?"

AT THREE o'clock that afternoon, as Markham sat in his room reading a book and doing his best not to think of the girl on Tyneside, he heard quick footsteps on the deck.

"Are you in, Mister Mate?" said a voice.

"Hullo!" said Markham and drew back the curtain that screened the doorway.

"How do!" said the round-faced Immigration Service man, in a tone of suppressed energy. "Say, we got that Jap o' yours!"

"What's that, Mr. Bennett?" said Markham hoarsely, and a cold chill seemed to grip his heart. "You got him?"

"You betcher life! I'd like you to come an' get acquainted with Mr. Wyatt, one o' the Immigration officers, an Inspector." And Markham followed the Immigration Service man to the other side of the deck where a thin, wiry, sunburned man in an old brown suit stood talking to the Captain and the chief engineer.

"Mr. Wyatt," said Bennett, "shake hands with Mr. Markham, the mate."

"Pleased to know yuh," said the sunburned man; and Markham gazed into a pair of deep-set gray eyes, so keen and far-sighted that it seemed to him as if they could penetrate his very brain and search out his innermost secrets.

"Well," said the Captain, stroking his beard, "an' what happened after Mr. Bennett here found the tracks leadin' up from high tide mark?"

"When I'd gotten that far," said the Immigration Service man, "I sent for Mr. Wyatt. An' he come along down to the lumber yard."

The sunburned man nodded.

"Yup. I come along an' seen the footprints. I guess that Jap must 'uv mended them shoes of his himself; there was a patch across each sole 'bout an inch wide. An' say—" the Immigration officer paused and looked from Markham to the Captain—"there was another feller he'd stopped to speak with; an' they walked across the yard together. Funny, that; weren't it? Anyways he reached the road, t'other side of the Santa Fé, an' then—" again the brown-faced man hesitated and pursed up his lips—"an' then it seemed like to me," he went on, "that the man with the mended shoes climbed into a rig—a spring wagon or a buggy, I guess—an' drove off."

Markham knew that the color had left his cheeks. He turned his back on the group by the gangway and lit his pipe, steeling his nerves to listen to what the man with the gray eyes might say next.

"Maybe the Jap was expectin' the wagon, maybe not. He beat it south, o' course. That's what I figgered I'd 'uv did, if I'd been a Jap. But, b'lieve me, if he'd 'uv went into San Diego it wouldn't 'uv been no use wastin' time lookin' fer him on Fifth Street."

The chief engineer, who had listened in awe-stricken silence, asked a question.

"Why, luck mostly," said Wyatt. "I headed down to'rds the lemon ranches, Chula Vista ways, an' I found the man I was after. How? Just by the biggest doggone fluke you ever heard of. Stopped to speak to a man an' had the engine go cold on me. Got out to crank up an' saw the tracks in the dust, with the patches on the soles, plumb in the middle of the road.

"Luck! Yes, sir, you're dead right, it was luck. But all the same, even if I hadn't seen the tracks right there I'd 'uv found the man—if he was in Chula Vista.

"I followed the trail down into the dip, south, an' up the other slope for about a block. Then I lost it. Well, I knew he'd be bound to make fer where his friends were, o' course. An' I weren't mistaken. He had. The rest was easy. An' the best of it was, back of the bunk house on a rubbish heap there were the shoes with the mended soles, also a peaked cap, pair o' jeans same as a sailor wears, an' a jumper. That settled it. I'd gotten him."

Markham's teeth bit through the amber stem of his pipe and the bowl clattered to the deck. He stooped and picked it up, laughing weakly, "Silly of me, wasn't it?" and then was silent, startled by the sound of his own laughter.

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"Well," said the Immigration officer, "an' now here I am, lookin' fer help. I dunno which of them Japs he'll be. I only saw one of 'em, an' I told *him* I was lookin' fer somebody's ranch, an' was that it, which it weren't. You see, the man we're after has some lie or other framed up, an' I mightn't be able to prove him a liar. That's why I'm here. One of you gentlemen will have to ride back with me in the machine an' identify him. P'r'aps, Captain, you'd like to come along yourself?"

"Certainly, Mr. Wyatt," said the Captain, "I'll be very pleased to be of any service, but—I'm not quite certain, now, if I could recognize the man. Let me see; er—what was he like, Mr Markham?"

"Perhaps Mr. Markham would come along with us?" suggested the Immigration officer, looking sidewise at Markham. "Then we'd be quite sure——"

"Why, of course," said the Captain. "You're ready, Markham, aren't you?"

"Yes sir," said Markham. "I'll—I'll get my hat."

"And an overcoat," said Wyatt. "It 'ull be chilly after dark."

IN HIS own room once more Markham looked at his reflection in the glass and saw that his face was pale beneath the tan, and that under his eyes and around his mouth there were lines that he had never before noticed.

He felt a sudden rush of pity for himself as he thought of what was bound to happen. Nothing could save him were Sugiyama to return to the ship. Indeed, a wild idea flashed into his brain to tell the whole truth without waiting, and have done with it.

And the girl at home! She would hear of everything, of course. She would know that he had killed a man, that he had lied, and—most terrible of all—that he had allowed a Jap deck hand to make a coward of him.

"Oh, my Heaven!" whispered Markham. "Why didn't I tell? Why didn't I tell?"

"Make haste, Markham!" shouted the Captain. "We've no time to waste."

He snatched up his coat and left the room, slamming the door.

On the wharf he looked up at the ship and saw the second engineer staring down at him. "Bring him back, mon, whate'er ye do. We dinna want to encourage the others yet awhile."

"We'll get him all right," said Markham, and he walked off with his lips twisted into a smile.

"I'd like to know who it was met the Jap," said the brown-faced man as they reached the lumber yard. "If I'd time I'd show you the tracks, but we'd better be pushin' on."

Markham, remembering that on his feet were the same shoes as those that he had been wearing the night before, hung back.

CHAPTER VIII

MARKHAM EASES HIS MIND

THE car was waiting on the road the other side of the railway, almost at the same spot where Markham had met the Jap with the wagon.

"Jump in," said the Immigration officer. "Gee! I rec'lect when we used to have to drive or ride horseback everywhere. Adds quite a few years to a man's life havin' a machine like this, don't it?"

And a few minutes later, as they left San Diego behind and were on the road that stretched across the flats, he turned to the Captain, who sat beside him.

"Tell yuh what, Captain, yuh don't realize how long a road is when you're runnin' one o' these things. This here, f'r instance: seems short now, don't it? Lord! It ain't, though, when you're joggin' along in the dark with a tired horse. Many's the time I've had to do that, I tell yuh."

Markham smiled grimly as he remembered the white pony. And then at the thought of the journey back he quivered.

Would Sugiyama have told his story by then? Or would he wait until they were back on board the *City of Gloucester?* And Markham wondered what they would say to him when they heard about Lockwood. Would he be handed over to the police? He laughed lightly. Of course not. He had only killed Lockwood in self-defense. They would understand how it happened when he told them about the girl on Tyneside—and the ruby and opal ring.

Snatches of conversation flew back to him.

"It's hard on us," Wyatt said. "Durned hard! If a Jap knows the ropes an' ain't

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scairt he can put it all over us. If he says he's been in this country fer three years an' has lost his passport, what can we do? Nothin'. We can't prove nothin'. Shucks! I'm just about ashamed to look a Jap in the face when I meet him."

"Is there any penalty for smuggling Japs into the United States?" asked the Captain.

"I should say," said Wyatt. "If any one is caught smugglin' Chinks or Japs into the country, believe me, it's pretty serious fer him. Read up the Immigration Laws, an' you'll see."

Markham sat back in a daze, seeing nothing but a blur of blue and green, hearing nothing but the *chutter-chutter-chutter* of the motor; until of a sudden he realized that the car had stopped before a white house surrounded by lemon and orange trees, and that a tall, melancholy-looking man was talking to Wyatt.

"Well," said the tall man in a slow drawl, "my foreman—he's a Jap, o' course—hires the hands."

"How many Japs have you got?" asked the Immigration officer.

"Thirteen. Only this past three days we've taken on five more, an' I ain't hardly seen 'em yet. An' anyways I can't tell where they come from, can I, Mr. Wyatt?"

"Well, it don't make any matter. I've brought a couple of gentlemen along who can identify the man, even if you can't. He's in your bunk house, Mr. Willis, I know. The trail's as clear as a coyote walkin' over soft mud, right to the door, an' he's left his shoes on a rubbish heap at the back. Say, if you ain't got nothin' else to do, Mr. Willis, p'r'aps you'll come along?"

The tall, melancholy rancher climbed into the car beside Markham.

"I'd like awful well to help you git your Jap," he said, "but it's not goin' to be so durn' easy. You'll find about twelve Japs there, but you won't find your man among 'em. He'll be hid somewheres."

MARKHAM listened in stony silence, staring heavy-eyed at the orchards. He wished that the tall, melancholy man would hold his tongue and let him think.

Supposing that the Captain of the *City of Gloucester* could not identify Sugiyama; who could? Not the rancher; not Wyatt; and certainly the other Japs would not. All depended on himself. Markham frowned and gnawed at his lip. Supposing then that he simply said that the missing man was not there! What would happen? He pondered, paying no heed to what the rancher was saying to Wyatt. What would happen if he said that he could not identify Sugiyama?

The car turned off from the main road and ran up a gentle slope between the trees toward a one story building of weather-beaten planks.

"This is the bunk house," said the rancher, and with a sigh; "your man won't be here, o' course."

Markham leaned forward, clenching his fists.

Five or six Japs were seated in front of the bunk house playing cards. Others stood in the doorway smoking. One trudged through the trees carrying a hoe. From the open windows came the sound of laughter, suddenly checked.

"Is Charley there?" said the rancher, alighting from the car. "That's my foreman," he explained.

A small, thick-set Jap emerged from the bunk house and blinked stupidly in the level sunlight. "Yes, sare."

"Charley, these gentlemen are from a ship, looking for a Japanese boy who's run away. They think, maybe, he's here."

"No get Japanese boy from er-sheep," said the foreman in a sulky tone.

"Now, see here!" snapped the Immigration officer, flapping his leg with his gauntlets; and Markham saw that the careless, good-natured expression had vanished from his face. "You've got that man hidden round the house. I know that fer a fact. How many boys have you got? Line 'em up, sharp! An' quit foolin' right now. I'm liable to git tired of this pretty quick."

"Huh!" grunted the ranchman, plucking at Markham's sleeve. "He'll never git anything out of 'em thataways."

Markham strolled away from the bunk house and gazed across the green orchards at the quiet waters of the bay and the narrow spit of land beyond, and the Pacific, amber and gold in the light of the setting sun.

Behind his back he could hear the shuffling of feet and the murmur of voices.

"Now, Captain, p'r'aps you'll kindly cast your eye over 'em an' let me know whether you can see the man you want."

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Markham wheeled round, unable to bear the strain. Thirteen Japs were lined up in front of the bunk house and the Captain of the *City of Glouœster* stood facing them with his hands on his hips and his head thrust forward a little.

"Mr. Wyatt," he said, with a shrug of his shoulders, "I'm sorry, but I couldn't say truthfully that he was here. But then again I can't say but what he mightn't be."

He plucked nervously at his square gray beard.

"It's hard to identify a Jap unless you're well acquainted with him, an' we only signed our crew on at Kobe just before we left for Muroran, anyhow."

LONG after the agony of that moment had passed, Markham could still see each detail of the scene before him—the Japs lined up in front of the bunk house; the open doorway; the lemon trees, sweet with perfume; the red glare of a small bonfire; the ploughed fields and the foothills beyond the orchards: and the bare mountains, all orange and brown, clear-cut against the blue of the sky.

"Mr. Mate," said Wyatt, "p'r'aps you'll have a try now, will yuh? If yuh can't recognize him, I guess you'll go to sea shorthanded."

Markham gritted his teeth and walked slowly toward the line of Japs.

A moment later he found himself opposite Sugiyama, looking him full in the face.

The Jap frowned slightly and Markham, quivering with a sudden weak anger, dropped his eyes.

And then he took an involuntary step backward, wondering what new and monstrous horror had befallen him.

"My Heaven!" he whispered. "Oh, my Heaven! My Heaven!" and began to laugh hoarsely.

"What is it, Mr. Markham?" said the Captain. "Is that the man? If he is, say so, an' have done with it!"

"Captain," said Markham. "Listen! I've something I must tell you. You thought Lockwood was washed overboard. He wasn't. He was killed."

"What!" said the Captain. "What's that you're sayin'? Lockwood killed!"

"Aye, killed! Listen! That night he came into my room and woke me up. Drunk he was, of course; and threatened to kill me."

"To kill *you!*" said the Captain. "He threatened to kill *you!*"

"He did. There was a girl, sir. You understand. And she liked me better than she did him. That was what started the whole trouble. She'd given me a ring; from Burmah it came, an' there wasn't its match in the wide world. Lockwood stole it while I was asleep.

"We had words, and he knocked me down, and then—then he put the ring into a purse and stowed it away in an inside pocket. He said it wasn't mine. You understand, sir, don't you? He stole it! And—well, then he rushed at me an' we fought. Yes sir, the door swung open, an' we fought on the deck in the dark with the ship rollin' scuppers under. An' then, sir, just as I was wonderin' how much longer I could last out before I went, I hit him in the face. . . . Wedged against the rails we were, like fightin' against the ropes—and a sea swept me across the deck. An' the next thing I knew I was in my own berth again."

Markham paused for breath. Wyatt was staring at the Japs, with a slight smile on his lips. The Captain of the *City of Gloucester* plucked at his beard and frowned. Willis, the tall rancher, stood with his shoulders rounded and his mouth open.

"Yes," continued Markham, "an' with me was one o' the deck hands."

"Ah!" said Wyatt. "Go on!"

"He'd seen what had happened; he'd seen how the fight ended; an' had carried me to my berth. Yes, an' then I heard that I'd sent Lockwood over the side to his death, that I'd killed him. An' my ring was gone, too. What could I do? I ought to have told, eh? But I didn't. My brain seemed to belong to some one else: numb-like. An' tellin' wouldn't have brought back Lockwood—or the ring, would it? I know I did wrong in not tellin', o' course, an' I paid for it. My word! But I paid for it.

"Two days after Lockwood was killed the man who—who'd carried me into my room tried to knife another man. I saw the truth in his eyes. An' I knew that he wasn't the meek, stupid man I thought he was. He would make me do what he wanted me to, or he'd tell what I'd done.

"A coward, wasn't I? Eh? Yes, I dare say I was."

Markham paused and looked at Wyatt.

"What do the Immigration Laws say, Mr. Wyatt? I guess I'll find out pretty

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soon. Yesterday the Jap swam from the ship; yesterday afternoon it was, in the fog; an' last night I helped him escape from the lumber yard an' drove him from San Diego out here."

"MR. MARKHAM!" burst out the Captain, "what's that you're tellin' us?"

"You met him in the lumber yard, hey?" said Wyatt nodding his head. "Well, an' then?"

"I helped him desert. See! I don't care a curse what happens to me now; I've told an' the worst's over. But I wouldn't have said a word but for one thing. Captain, you couldn't identify the man. I'd made up my mind I wouldn't. I'd pass him by an' say he wasn't there, that they must have hidden him away. Could you have told I was lyin'? Or you, Mr. Wyatt? No, none of you could. An' I'd ha' gone back on board ship, knowin' my secret was safe. An' now I'll go to prison, p'r'aps, but I don't care a curse, I'm happy."

"Well," said the Captain in a sharp, uncertain voice; "which is the man?"

Markham turned and grasped Sugiyama's arm. The Jap struggled, but Markham held him firmly.

"That 'ull do!" grunted Wyatt. "Stand still, or we'll make yuh!"

"This is the man," said Markham, still clutching the wrist. "This is the man I helped desert."

The Captain gave a little moan.

"Why in Heaven's name did you tell us, Markham? Why couldn't you have kept quiet a little longer? We didn't want the Jap, man!"

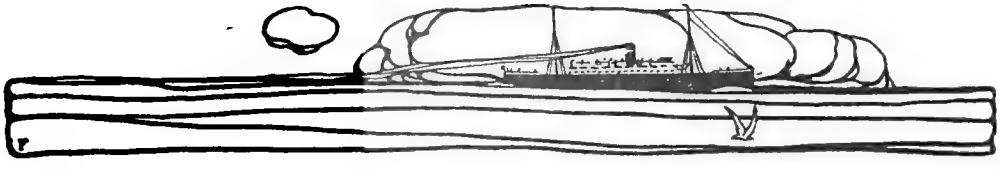
"Look!" said Markham with a laugh. "Look here! Look at this!"

On the little finger of Sugiyama's right hand was a ring—a band of silver in which were set two opals and a ruby.

"You see this ring," said Markham wildly. "It's mine; mine, you understand! The ring that Lockwood stole that night! The ring that the girl gave me! Lockwood had it on him when we fought. Where did this man get it from, but out of Lockwood's purse; from an inside pocket? Stand up, you devil! Stand up or I'll make you! That other ring is Lockwood's! An' this, too! He was wearin' them that night. See! That's what you were lookin' at in my room, you thief!"

Sugiyama's face was a yellowish-gray color; in his dark eyes was a look of hate and fear. He fought to wrench his hand free.

"Look at him an' judge for yourselves! Look at him! He took the rings from Lockwood when we were both lying senseless on the deck. Searched him; went through his pockets; stole everything he had. You understand now, don't you? It wasn't me at all! You see how it was, you must! This man—look at him now!—threw Lockwood over the side—murdered him!"



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The MIGHT OF RIGHT

By Ralph Delamere Keefer, Late of the Royal Northwest Mounted, and Stephen Chalmers

IT WAS Constable Tommy Scott who walked into the back room of the Last Chance at Dawson and, in the face of Devil-Ace Jordan's friends and a .45 that lay handily alongside a stack of gold and chips, seized the said Devil-Ace by the neck and marched him off to the Yukon Guardroom.

It took some nerve; but Tommy had it. No doubt he always had it, but there was a time when Tommy himself did not know it, and not a few of his fellow constables mistook him for a physical coward. It was Forty-Mile Grainger who discovered to Tommy that he was Constable Thomas Scott of the Royal Northwest Mounted Constabulary. And this was the manner of the discovering.

SOON after bringing out Constable Pine, who developed insanity and afterward committed suicide at Beaver Lake, Grainger, to his disgust, was sent back to detachment duty at Taku. The only redeeming feature in this compliment to his administration of law at Taku was that he was given for a junior constable the aforementioned Tommy Scott, a recent acquisition of her Majesty's forces in the Northwest.

He was a lovable sort of lad, this Constable Tommy; big, good-natured in the main, of Highland Scotch parentage and, like most of his race, touched with many moods—the melancholy of the Celt, the wild strain of the Norse and, again, a Gallic enthusiasm which the Stuart followers may have acquired from their French friends.

Grainger more than half understood Tommy. What he did not fully grasp of his mingled character was a source of interesting study in the close companionship at lonely Taku. Constable Scott, for instance, could—and seemed to love to—tell stories of a superstitious Celtic flavor that frightened himself, while they made even Grainger's spine creep. He was as afraid of the dark as a child and as gun-shy as a woman; yet he would endure exposure and starvation without a murmur of complaint. He would grow strangely pale when his duty compelled him to quell lawlessness, seeming actually to fear violence or recourse to violence, and he would quiver all over before and after some excitement. Yet in actual battle he seemed to enjoy himself as if he had been born in Kilkenny.

In short, his was a case of racial temperament, as Grainger finally decided; the temperament that makes a Highland regiment shiver, pray and sometimes weep before the engagement in which, like red demons, they invariably sweep the field. But as yet Tommy did not know himself. Neither had any man seen him put to the test of courage.

It came the Spring of the year, an early

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Spring that promised a speedy opening of the rivers, lakes and trails. Grainger had spent the night at Nakina and was returning to Taku on the Yukon Trail that morning when he saw the figure of a Cree Indian coming toward him at a wild gait. Recognizing the uniform of the police, the Cree waved his arms and came on faster.

"*Chemoginis*—come fast!" he cried, without abating his rapid approach. "Red-Hair Ma-Guk white man drink *hootch!* Come François store by Silver Salmon middle night—want more! François say no have got—*Chemoginis* not let him keep—no can give *hootch!* Red-Hair Ma-Guk say him lie! Shoot François! François dead!"

"Where Red-Hair Ma-Guk go?" demanded Forty-Mile Grainger, seizing the Cree's arm as they came together and turning him back on the trail at even greater speed. "Which way him go?"

"Ma-Guk in François store," said the Cree, panting. "Go in after him kill François. Drink *hootch* all night. Make war song. Make war dance all night. Then no sing any more. Red-Hair fall drunk—no can move. Other *Chemoginis*—big-little *Chemoginis*—him wait Red-Hair come out."

"Waiting for him to come out!" muttered Grainger, increasing his gait, so that the half winded Cree fell behind and wasted more wind in unnecessary further explanations.

François Beaupré's store was on the Yukon Trail, a little beyond where it crosses the Silver Salmon River. Beaupré dealt in almost anything legitimate, but he was also suspected of a little business in the illegitimate. That mattered little now. He had been killed through his connection with the forbidden traffic in liquor. He was beyond the law. But the law was extremely fussy about the observance of the Sixth Commandment, no matter what the character of the illegally deceased. Therefore, for the killing of a whisky smuggler, Red-Hair McGurk must hang.

This Red-Hair McGurk was more of an open suspect than his victim had been. It was freely maintained that the worthy pair had worked together in many a piece of underhand industry. But, where François had schemed in the dark and worn the guise of respectability in the light, Red-Hair's vices had been so openly practised night and day alike that his consistency was almost a virtue. Until now he had never been caught red-handed in the Taku region. But the Northwest Mounted is a patient body, with a long arm and an encompassing grip.

But what was Constable Thomas Scott thinking of in "waiting for Red Hair to come out?"

"The thick-witted, canny Hielan' blockhead!" muttered Forty-Mile, as he forged ahead. "He can't come out till he's sober and able to take care of himself. Then——"

WHEN he reached Beaupré's store there was something sinister about the appearance of the situation. The store was desolate. Not a human being was in sight, save Constable Scott, who was patrolling restlessly in front, with a cocked revolver in his right hand. The usual loungers around François' store had vanished, fearing implication.

"There's been murder done here," said Constable Tommy, who was rather wide-eyed and pale. "I'm mighty glad you've come."

Forty-Mile stared—almost glared—at Scott.

"Where's your man?" he snapped.

"He's inside," said Tommy, with child-like innocence.

"Handcuffed?"

"N-no," said the junior constable, blushing suddenly where he had been colorless before. "You see, he's quite safe—drunk, I mean. I didn't go in. I was waiting for assistance. Might as well, you know."

"I see," said Forty-Mile scathingly. "You're so chockful of cold nerve that you hated to take advantage of the poor chap. You'd rather wait until he sobered up and you could explain to him how painful it was to perform the unpleasant duty of apprehending him for murder.

"Oh, blazes!" he broke off impatiently. "Stand right where you are!"

Forty-Mile rapidly made a circuit of the building. Besides the store's front entrance, which Scott had been guarding, there were several windows and a rear door. It would take Red-Hair too much time to unbar a window as a means of sudden escape. The door was locked inside, but a turn of the wrist and a pull would suffice to open that avenue of exit.

Forty-Mile darted back to the front.

"Off with your snowshoes!" he said sharply to Constable Scott. "Guard the rear door, although he may have escaped

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that way hours ago and taken the key with him to bluff you! Quick! I'm going inside."

As Scott disappeared behind the house, Grainger whipped off his own snowshoes, advanced upon the front door and beat a tattoo upon it with the butt of his revolver.

"Inside there, McGurk!" he cried, his ear close to the boards. "Your time's up. You come out or I'll break in!"

"You go to ——!" snarled a voice in the store—a voice charged with the nervous reaction of much liquor.

Grainger drew back, then flung his whole weight and force against the door. The lock screws burst from the woodwork. Forty-Mile sprang inside and immediately stumbled and fell full length over an obstacle at his feet. It was the body of François Beaupré, which Red-Hair had locked in with himself.

Simultaneously with Grainger's crashing fall, the rear door flew open and there appeared before the junior constable a thunderbolt in the shape of a red-haired Irish giant with fury-and-liquor-empurpled face, bloodshot eyes and two ponderous fists menacingly uplifted.

The apparition was so horrifying in aspect that Tommy Scott involuntarily took a step backward, and the blood chilled in his scalp. That momentary retreat was hesitation's loss. A long arm shot out and a great fist yanked the revolver from the young constable's hand.

With the rapidity of desperation, taking a long chance, Red-Hair ran backward toward the house corner, the pistol covering Scott's breast. As the Irish giant vanished around the end of the building, Forty-Mile Grainger came plunging through the back exit. He found himself face to face with Constable Tommy Scott, who looked like a uniformed statue in painted marble.

"Where?" said Grainger quickly. "Which way?"

"I—I dunno!" gasped Tommy. "He's gone. He got past me."

Forty-Mile Grainger's gray eyes flashed from Scott's hands to his belt.

"Where's your gun?" he demanded, with a rasping note.

"He—he took it—he's got it," said the junior constable, the ignominy of his situation stinging him suddenly.

Grainger stared at him with perhaps less unkindliness than curiosity. Then he slowly returned his own revolver to its holster.

"Is it possible that you are a coward?" said he.

Constable Scott visibly stiffened. His fists shut tight and he locked his jaws, while a strange glare filled his eyes. But the glare died before Grainger's steady gaze. The Berserk rage melted into moisture and a quick hot tear flashed upon Scott's boyish cheek.

"I—I think I must be," he gulped.

Grainger turned away quickly.

"Well, he's gone—for the present," said he, not unkindly. "Let's take a look in here."

He turned back into the store. The tale of tragedy was revealed at a glance. Beaupré was shot through the throat and was quite dead. Beside a stove in the middle of the floor was an overturned chair. All around it the planking was stained with spilled liquor and decorated with empty bottles, not a few of which seemed to have been shattered with great violence, for pieces of broken glass were visible even in far corners. On the store counter stood three empty bottles coated with candle grease, the candles having burned down into the bottle necks.

Grainger surveyed the picture for a few seconds, but in that brief time he visualized a scene that must have been amazing—a huge red-haired man seated by candle light with his feet on the stove, drinking and bawling, smashing bottles in his madness of intoxication, perhaps toasting the dead man whose blood mingled with the spilled liquor, or inviting him to "wake up and have a drink."

Then silence, but for a stertorous snoring and the candles guttering in the bottle necks until the last sputtered and went out, leaving utter darkness upon the tragedy.

Forty-Mile turned to find Constable Scott standing silently behind him. Grainger's own face was now pale, but a change had come over the Celt. His face was utterly wooden, except for a sullen glow in the eyes.

"I'll not stop till I get yon man," said he, with a strong accent.

"Neither will I," said Forty-Mile. "It's my duty."

"It'll be my pleasure forby," said Scott.

"Come on, then," said Grainger, stepping over the body of Beaupré and into the open air. "On with your snowshoes. It'll be

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heavy going, for he'll travel but one way—down the Silver Salmon to the Taku River; then for the border and Juneau—if he can."

THE trail was easily found. Red-Hair had no snowshoes. His tracks suggested kangaroo-like plunges into rotten-crusted, surface-thawed snow. They crossed the Yukon trail and headed, as Grainger had anticipated, down the bank of the Silver Salmon River.

"Why didn't the fool take the right bank instead of the left?" said Grainger over his shoulder. "He'll be trapped in that neck of land where the Nakina River and the Silver Salmon join in the Taku—unless he crosses one or the other on rotten ice."

Scott, ploughing along behind, made no comment.

The trail was as plain as an elephant's in mud. Once or twice there occurred a great spoor on the heavy, water-soaked snow, as if Red-Hair had stumbled and fallen.

"He's feeling the pace, now that the liquor has worked off," said Grainger, quietly. "*Sic semper*—with drunkards. We'll take him in an hour."

Still no word from Constable Scott.

They reached the fork of the Silver Salmon and the Nakina, where they merged into one river, the Taku. M'Gurk's trail led straight to the crotch of the land, moved to left and right in an uncertain manner, then went down the bank and out across the ice, which was covered with a foot of slush.

Grainger followed, Scott close behind. Forty-Mile had little fear of the ice. If the giant Red-Hair had crossed it on foot-soles, a man of no greater weight could surely make it on snowshoes, which distribute pressure. But Red-Hair had not crossed without mishap.

"Hold up, Tommy!" Forty-Mile suddenly cried, throwing back a warning hand.

Not five yards ahead of him there was a great hole in the ice, a hole slowly filling in with the snow-slush. Apparently Red-Hair had gone into the River. His trail led right up to the break.

Grainger scanned the unbroken ice beyond the hole. Had Red-Hair cheated the law after all? But signs gave the answer. There was a great disturbance of the slush upon the further edge of the break, and beyond that a faint trail—not yet quite obliterated by the closing-in snow-broth—reached straight to the opposite bank.

"He got across," said Grainger, half turning. "So can we, then . . . Get back!" he shouted, becoming aware that Scott had crept up and was close behind him.

But it was too late. The combined weight of the two men standing together so near the broken edge was too much for the rotten ice, which gave a half wheeze, half groan, then went down with a roar.

It seemed as if the entire ice surface of the River had collapsed, and in a moment the two constables were floundering in the bitter cold waters of the Nakina.

Grainger came up first and turned to his comrade. Tommy's head popped up and there was a grin on his face as he clutched and clung to the edge of the firm ice. Once in trouble he had plenty of nerve—of a sort.

"I'll bet Ma-Guk is sober now if he got a dose of this!" he chuckled.

As he spoke, the edge of the ice broke under his weight and he was submerged again. Grainger also attempted to pull himself up upon the unbroken edge, but the rotten ice played him the same ill trick. At a second try, Tommy Scott, the lighter man of the two, managed to crawl upon the unbroken surface without mishap. He worked his way cautiously to where Grainger was again clinging to the edge and extended a helping hand. No sooner was the hand gripped and a strain exerted than there came another collapse of the ice. Again Scott and Grainger were in the river.

"Sorry, Tommy," said Grainger. "No use, though. There's only one way. Close up beside me and let's break our way to the bank."

They closed up shoulder to shoulder on the further side of the break.

"Now!" cried Forty-Mile, exerting his weight on the edge, as did Scott.

Crash! went the ice under their combined weight.

"Again!"

Crash!

And in this strange manner, bursting the ice and shoving aside the broken slabs with feet and hands, Constables Grainger and Scott crossed the Nakina River in pursuit of Red-Hair McGurk, the murderer.

They were exhausted, but still game, when they clawed their way up the opposite bank.

"If you value your health, don't stop!" said Forty-Mile, when Tommy would have paused for breath.

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On they went again, dripping and staggering, on the trail of Red-Hair. Already the raw air was penetrating their wet clothing. They must keep moving. They must find shelter and a fire.

"One thing," said Grainger, as much to exercise his jaws as to encourage his junior, "McGurk's soaked and half frozen himself. He'll make for shelter, too, and his trail's heading straight for that old shack at the base of Crater Mountain. A month's pay we find him there!"

Tommy's teeth were chattering like castanets, and he said nothing.

"Another thing," said Grainger. "We're on the east bank of the Nakina. When we get him we can strike north and hit the trail without recrossing that mud pie."

They pushed on harder than ever, their feet numb and their moccasins squelching on the snowshoes as they splashed through the watery surface of the deep drifts.

Presently Forty-Mile laughed.

"Believe I'd kill Beaupré myself at this minute if he refused me a swig of *hootch!*"

Scott mumbled something which came inarticulately through his rattling teeth.

IN LESS than an hour they came within sight of the deserted shack. It stood on a gentle slope, backed by dreary pines and Crater Mountain, which towered thousands of feet into the sodden skies. At the point where the two Northwest policemen reconnoitered, Red-Hair's irregular tracks ended, for the slope had been washed bare of its late snows.

"But he's there," said Grainger. He turned suddenly upon Scott. "Well?. . . "

Constable Tommy Scott's teeth chattered violently and Forty-Mile could see that his knees shook. Was it from cold? . . . Or fear? The senior constable's gray eyes seemed to inquire.

"Well?. . . " he repeated.

The chattering ceased. Tommy had locked his loose jaws.

"Gimme your gun," said he, through clenched teeth.

Grainger hesitated. He was sorry for the lad. It was, after all, not Tommy's fault that he lacked nerve. He had been made that way. Also, suppose Tommy bungled the job? They might, in that case, lose McGurk for good. No, it was not Tommy's business now. It was Grainger's to arrest the murderer.

"Gimme your gun!" Scott repeated, putting out a shaking hand, but with an emphatic shove of the arm.

Grainger studied the face before him. Then——

"Go ahead, Constable Scott," said he. He handed over the revolver, butt foremost, and laid his left hand upon Tommy's shoulder.

"Remember," he added, gently, "if you fail me once, you will have failed yourself twice. Make good, Tommy. I want you to."

Constable Scott gripped the pistol butt and, followed closely by Grainger, started up the slope with an almost reckless zeal. But his pace slowed as he neared the shack door, which was suspiciously ajar.

"Go ahead!" Forty-Mile whispered. "He's armed; but so are you."

Scott advanced again, but stopped short within three paces of that door, behind which waited a desperate man with death in his right hand. And there was a grave-like stillness within and without the shack. If Red-Hair were there he must be aware of their presence and ready to play his own game with liberty against the gallows as the only bet.

Grainger could see Tommy's jaw working under his left ear.

"It's your last chance," he whispered. "Or shall I take it from you?"

Constable Scott started. Chin up, he marched to the door, kicked it open with his foot and, with a sort of forced boldness, stepped inside.

"Red-Hair McGurk!" he cried, but there was a quiver in his throat. "In the name of the Queen——"

Then he stopped short and stared. Forty-Mile Grainger, peering over Tommy's shoulder, saw that the shack was empty.

"Bilked!" said Grainger softly.

"Oh, my Lord!" burst from Scott's lips, and he pitched the revolver on the sodden floor and began to rave like an insane man. "I'm not fit for this work! I'm not fit! I'm a —— coward, that's what I am! I'll fight anything in the open, but *this*—— To go through *that* and find I've been scared about nothing—*nothing!*"

He walked up and down with his fists clenched and his whole aspect that of a man overwrought with fury or on the edge of another form of hysteria.

"That's all right, Tommy," said Grainger,

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picking up his revolver. "The point is, you *did it*, and you'll do it again. Honestly, I thought he was here, myself.

"And now," he went on, "there's some wood in that corner, and my match safe is waterproof. Build a fire in that old stove there, while I talk to you."

As Scott mechanically obeyed, Grainger kicked off his snowshoes and in his moccasins walked softly up and down. While he talked to Tommy, his eyes took in every detail of the immediate surroundings. They were in a long-abandoned shack. Mildew clung to the walls.

A cracked portable stove was rust-caked with age. The turf and mud plaster between the logs had fallen out, and every crevice let in daylight.

The place was roughly ceiled, however. There was a trap in the middle of the ceiling, but it was wide open and daylight shone through the roof above and beyond it.

There might be room up there for a man to lie flat under the eaves, but the roof was too low to allow, say, an eight-foot ladder being drawn up into the loft. There was no sign of a ladder below.

Grainger eyed the open trap for a moment; then his glance fell to the stove and he measured the distance be tween the top of it and the trap. Apparently satisfied that everything was all right, he went on addressing his mate.

"I TAKE it back about your being a coward, Tommy," he was saying. "You did there what many a less imaginative man would have been scared to do, even if pride in the presence of others forced him to action.

"But there's something you've got to learn, m' son. It's this: A so-called brave man can be a deadly coward when he is exerting his bravery in a wrong cause, and a so-called coward can be as brave as a lion when right is behind him.

"You've got to learn the meaning of that scarlet tunic you wear. It is the symbol of the law, and no man who wears it need fear the Devil in any disguise.

"That's why a single London bobby can quell a whole mob without striking a blow. The mob is in the wrong; the bobby is in the right.

"Conscience is more than half of bravery and more than four-fifths of cowardice. The rest's physical and moral idiosyncracy. D'ye follow me?"

"Idio—who?" said Tommy, absently.

Grainger glanced at him. Scott had his hands flat upon the rusty stove and, despite a certain blankness in his gaze, his face expressed a peculiar intentness.

"I'll give you an example of the might of right," Grainger went on, with an odd side glance at Scott. "You didn't know that it took only three hundred men in that scarlet tunic to handle forty thousand more or less hostile Indians, to say nothing of white desperadoes, in this Northwest, and make it possible for civilization?

"You didn't know that when six thousand Sioux came whooping over the border after the Custer massacre, a single constable in that red coat checked them by yanking their chief off his horse and clapping him in jail.

"You didn't know——"

"That wasn't much bravery," said Tommy, still absent-mindedly. "He was wearing a red tunic."

As he spoke, Constable Scott was peeling off his own scarlet coat, probably with the intention of drying it. But his face wore a queer smile.

"Exactly," said Grainger, eying his junior closely. "You've made my point. The man who wears that red coat and is still afraid of the skin underneath it, is doubly a coward, for—" he suddenly raised his voice —"the man who fires a shot at the scarlet tunic of the Royal Northwest Mounted Constabulary is firing a shot at the heart of the British Empire, and that man will be followed to the ends of the earth, if necessary, and punished!

"Right is might, m' son, so long as might is right; and if you don't believe it—*watch!*"

FORTY-MILE GRAINGER drew his revolver and came to a stop under the trap in the ceiling.

"Red-Hair McGurk!" he cried. "Will you come down, or shall I come up?"

There was no answer. Grainger shoved the revolver back in its holster and planted his right foot on the stove, preparing for a spring.

But he found himself blocked by Constable Thomas Scott. Tommy's face was quite without expression, but his eye pupils were like little lights in distant darkness.

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"Hold on," said he quietly. "I saw him first. *The stove was warm!*"

"Take the gun," said Grainger, stepping aside, and his face was alight with honest gladness.

"To —— with the gun!" said Tommy, "and, saving her Gracious Majesty, the coat, too!"

He set his foot on the stove, gripped the edge of the trap with his hands and pulled himself up into the loft with the litheness of a panther and the ease of a gymnast.

Immediately there was a deafening report in the loft. Constable Scott's body came down through the trap, legs first. But after it, clutched by the neck, came Red-Hair McGurk!

The two crashed to the floor in a heap. The stolen revolver flew from the murderer's hand. Forty-Mile secured it, stuck it in his holster and leaned against the wall, seeming immensely entertained by the wrestling match on the floor.

Apparently neither man was badly hurt so far; but the battle was only beginning. It lasted about ten minutes. During that time Grainger never made a move to assist his comrade in arms.

At first Red-Hair McGurk had the best of it, being by far the larger, heavier and more powerful man.

But Tommy had the staying power as against Red-Hair's long-continued debauchery. The giant's breath came short. The sweat rolled from his face in great beads and little livers. All at once he yielded the fight, collapsing limply on his back, while his lungs gave forth a hoarse coughing noise like that of an exhaust pipe.

"Darbies?" suggested Grainger, offering Tommy a pair of handcuffs.

"Thanks!" gasped Constable Thomas Scott.

A FEW minutes later, when Red-Hair McGurk was helpless in manacles, which, however, did not fetter his tongue and its stream of profanity, Tommy got his breath back and looked up at Constable Grainger with a grin.

"Did you mean all that scarlet tunic guff for me, or the man in the loft?" he asked.

Forty-Mile chuckled.

"I'm mighty glad his shot missed the British Empire!" said he. "Let's dry out and start. We can make Nakina before dark."

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by

HUGH LOFTING

"I'M WORRIED."

Any one who did not know the Resident, hearing him say this, would probably have selected the word "bored" as more descriptive of the external Franklin at that moment. But Staines, the Policeman, to whom the remark was addressed, had spent some considerable time with the Political Officer. He knew that Franklin always looked bored; so he merely answered: "Oh. What about?"

"About Carson. Of late, our Medical Officer has caused me a great deal of anxiety. Worry is not good for the health in West Africa; therefore, dear Policeman, I am going to unburden myself to you."

Staines was always called "the Policeman" for short. His duties consisted of drilling and commanding a hundred native police, with whom he controlled, under the orders of the Political Officer, several thousand square miles of Nigeria. Three small bungalows set around a tennis court—such was the Residency Compound on which the two men were now looking from Franklin's veranda. Here the Resident, the Doctor and the Policeman—the only white men within fifty miles—formed socially the typical European community of those parts, and officially the local administration of his Majesty's Crown Colonies.

Staines moved his huge body in the creaking deck chair, raised the express rifle lying in his lap and minutely examined the lock.

"Go ahead."

"Carson," began the other, "is the best-hearted little man the Lord ever made, but he has no conscience, no moderation, and no balance where his science is concerned."

"Oh, tell me something new! Wasn't I preaching to him myself this blessed morning about overwork? He's a crazy enthusiast. All the sciences that were ever invented—he dabbles in every one of them. This is no country for such exertions."

"He has," continued Franklin, "achieved a great deal in that way. Keeps it all in a gigantic diary which he wouldn't sell for its weight in gold. Now he exists for toxicology."

"That sounds uncomfortable. What is it?"

The Hibernian, Staines, was known throughout the Colony for three things: the smartness of his Houssa detachment, the cut of the neat clothes that covered his long wiry frame, and the accuracy of his rifle shooting. He never appeared to bother himself much with anything else.

"POISONS," replied Franklin. "He's got them on the brain. He has been talking to me here for the last two hours—an incessant stream since three o'clock. Very much annoyed with me because I won't have Igbo arrested. You know Igbo, I imagine—the juju man?"

"I do," replied Staines slowly. "Exceedingly well—by sight and reputation. He has been responsible for more murders and human sacrifices than any other witch

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doctor in the District. He should have been hanged long ago. The little fiend is so clever, though, that I've never been able to get sufficient evidence to convict him on."

"He's brilliant, Staines—an artist in his way. Like the rest of these juju fellows, he *knows* the natives. We, who run the country, have barely made their acquaintance. He and his ilk have held the negro horde in an impregnable, superstitious grip for centuries."

"Yes, I know the gentry," murmured Staines. "Cure a child or kill an enemy—for a price; incantations, dances, claptrap and rubbish! Their miracles are mostly mesmerism."

"Mostly. But beneath all their religious and medical fraud, there lies a little real, original science—a few drugs, a few methods, which the white world of medicine has never heard of. Whenever you hear Carson use the boys' expression, 'black man's medicine,' you would think he were going to burst a blood-vessel from sheer contempt; but that small component of real science in the juju humbug is what our Medical Officer is now on the track of."

Staines moved impatiently.

"Still I don't see that is any reason for your anxiety."

"Wait! I wish you had been here to hear him. Carried on as if the end of the world were at hand! He has, as you know, worked like a slave to establish some idea of sanitation and hygiene in the minds of these filthy townspeople. In this he has encountered a lot of underhand opposition from Igbo, the juju man, who professionally resents Carson's interference with his ancient grip on the native mind."

"Oh, I begin to see where the shoe pinches, now."

"Only partially," Franklin rejoined. "The really dangerous element in the case is this: Carson wants to get hold of a poison which Igbo is using. He has had his eye on it for a long time. I don't know much about such things myself, but I think he told me it was a spinal-neurotic poison, with symptoms similar to those of strychnin."

"Perhaps it *is* strychnin."

"He says no, but very similar; convulsions, *risus sardonicus* and so on. That last item I understand to be a peculiarly unattractive grin which people afflicted by strychnin poisoning indulge in—contraction, I presume. But the symptom which distinguishes the work of this particular drug is that the leg and face muscles are the *first* to be affected. I feel quite an authority on these things since Pills has lectured me. It is extremely deadly; even a short while after taking the stuff, the legs become powerless and *risus sardonicus* begins."

"Pleasant! Should suit Igbo fine."

"The muscles of the arms and shoulders," Franklin went on, "are the last to be influenced; and, as is frequent with this class of poisons, the brain remains clear almost to the end. Carson is crazy about it. Apparently, like most potent poisons, it will probably be found to possess great medicinal value when used properly.

"His search after it has become an obsession with him. He is practically certain that it is a vegetable growth; he wants to obtain a sample of the drug and a specimen of the plant from which it is extracted—with some technical information. He assures me that once he has done that, he will be able to put a stop to the murders and human sacrifices which are carried out by its means—a big step toward smashing the ancient power of juju."

"When was the last case of it he spotted?" the Policeman inquired.

"Last night. He was asked to see a dying Filani woman in the town. Directly he saw her he knew it was this drug again. He felt as powerless to effect a cure as he had done with the other cases which had come under his notice. Of course he suspected Igbo at once, as he has every reason to believe he is the only one in the neighborhood who has the stuff. This morning he visited her again, expecting to find the woman dead."

"WELL?"

"Well, he found her alive and kicking."

"How nice!"

"That's what I say," agreed the Resident. "But Carson is horribly annoyed. Very glad for the lady's sake of course, but it appears that the whole case was nothing but a trap laid for poor Pills by the wily Igbo."

"Oh, the deuce!"

"Apparently an antidote is known, too. Igbo, in order to wean the allegiance of the ignorant natives away from the teaching of the white doctor back to his own abominable rule, presumably had the woman poisoned in secret. Then, after Carson had

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demonstrated his inability to save her, the juju man arrives in state, administers his antidote, and great is the fame of 'black man's medicine' spread throughout the land."

Staines nodded gravely but did not interrupt.

"He asked me to have Igbo arrested and brought here, so that he could try to get the desired information from him. Of course, I told him we couldn't do Grand Inquisitor hicks like that when we are working for his Majesty—especially with no real evidence. He was terribly rattled; I believe he would fry the beggar if he got the chance."

"But can't he get his precious information somewhere else?" the other asked. "The average native probably knows of the drug."

"Most likely; but merely of its existence—as a deadly agent in the hands of juju men. Besides, they wouldn't give such damning information to a white man, if they could. You yourself must be pretty familiar with the baffling obscurity of that untrodden realm which some one has called 'the back of the black man's mind.' They are all fools—children; but they have enough reticence and discernment to keep what they want to themselves. They are all terrified of the witch doctor, but loyal to him."

The Resident sat up on the edge of his chair, and a little earnestness seemed to creep into his tone as he resumed:

"Now you see some reason in my anxiety, don't you? Of Carson, one may always expect the normal, the ordinary, the comfortable, until he gets warmed up on the war-path of research; and then! Then no one knows what to expect! For months the man has thought of nothing else but this poison. He is wild with rage against Igbo for his obstruction to modern sanitary work among the natives. He has been humiliated by the juju man. Carson is going to get that drug, or know the reason why! That's the situation."

"Hum, I see," commented Staines after a moment's pause. "'Some local thunderstorms to be expected,' as the weather man says, eh?"

"Yes, that's about the forecast. I wouldn't mind so much if I could keep him constantly under my parental wing; but I've got to go up-country next Monday, to Gbadomoshi. I can't postpone the trip; there's a row on. I want you to watch Carson for me till I get back. Of course, you are liable to be called away yourself at any moment; but while you are here, keep an eye on him. Play tennis with him, fish with him, take him out after buck, get sick—anything to keep him busy—away from his poisons and Igbo."

Franklin stood up.

"Now I must finish that report on the kernel crop. Going after your fantom leopard again? See you later."

MONDAY morning found the Resident up and ready for his journey by seven o'clock, with his escort of six constables and a sergeant. A small procession of loaded porters had been sent ahead still earlier. As Franklin mounted his nervous little Arab under the solitary palm which overhung the tiny dwellings, the door of the Doctor's bungalow was opened. Carson came slowly down the steps and crossed the Compound in the bright, horizontal, morning sunlight.

A short, fair man, evidently of a kindly disposition, about thirty-six years of age, a trifle inclined to be stout and somewhat under the average height; if he impressed a stranger at all before he met his gaze, it was as a rather ordinary-looking little chap. His eyes, however, caught the attention. From his round, smooth-shaven face a pair of the mildest blue orbs stared out upon the world with the ingenuous scrutiny of a child, but in that same way that it is possible to observe a child's clear mind appraising you, if you are a newcomer. So you felt that in the doctor's brain, behind those large, candid, innocent, blue eyes, you were undergoing a spiritual dissection.

"Hullo, Franklin, where are you off to?"

"Gbadomoshi."

"S'long!"

The Policeman, probably divining the Resident's wish, walked by his stirrup down the path leading out of the Compound.

"Stay with him all you can, Staines. I have a wretched, uncomfortable feeling about leaving him now. If you are called away before I get back, send a runner to me at once. I shall be in Gbadomoshi till Thursday. The trip takes two days, with comfort. I am afraid if we are both absent at the same time, he will take the opportunity to come to grips with Igbo—or some other wild notion."

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"Right you are, old man; I'll watch him. Good-by. Take care of yourself."

"Good-by, Staines!"

The little *cortège* filed out on to the road. As the police squad passed Staines, he leaned on the gatepost and inspected the men individually and carefully. He felt justly proud of the little, thick-set fellows whom he had transformed from dirty, ragged loafers into smart, efficient units of national defense. A fez cap with a long tassel, blue serge shirt and trunks, puttees of the same material, a wide scarlet sash, cartridge belt, bayonet and rifle: it was a handsome, simple uniform. And as seven bare feet kicked the dust from the red earth simultaneously, and seven black hands whipped up to the salute as they passed their officer, Staines turned back into the Compound with a feeling of genuine satisfaction in his heart—mixed with a little resentment.

He always gave Franklin his best squad and senior sergeant for inspection tours; but the Irishman invariably felt some resentment at letting them go. Their example was so valuable for the rest of the men; the detachment never quite maintained their superlative "slickness" while these seven were absent. Besides, the sergeant was the only man in the District who knew how to stalk buck! That gentleman, now conceitedly bringing up the rear, was a privileged person, and permitted himself to grin a broad farewell to Staines as he swung out through the gate, marked time, and roared (with a quite inimitable accent), "Left wheel!"

II

THAT evening when the Policeman entered Carson's bungalow to collect the Doctor for a game of tennis, he found him bending over a table littered with test-tubes, retorts and bottles.

"Hullo, Pills! Still pottering at this hour? What's this wonderful box of tricks?"

The Policeman lifted from the corner of the table what appeared externally to be a small metal cigarette case. Its interior, however, displayed a rack of tiny vials. Carson leaned over and took it from him.

"That is a pocket hypodermic case," replied the Doctor. "Rather neat, eh?"

"Quite. I never saw one before. What's that large, funny-shaped tube at the end of the row there—the one without any label on it?"

"Ah," said Carson taking the tube carefully from the case, "that, Staines, is a little discovery of my own—a new compound of phosphorus, and, incidentally, the most powerful poison in existence when used hypodermically. The reason there is no label on the tube is that as yet the compound has no name."

"And for what is the queer shape of the beast?" inquired the Policeman.

"Oh, that is just an ordinary glass tube, drawn out at one end and sealed—a common way of carrying drugs and serums. When you wish to use the contents you simply file off the tapered point. It has to be done carefully, however, as the point is very brittle and very sharp. I knew a student once who, while working with these tubes in a laboratory, clumsily got the point of one stuck in his wrist somehow; the fragile end immediately broke off under the skin, the poison was injected, and he had a very bad time for some weeks."

"And do you mean to tell me," the Irishman asked with a magisterial air, "that you carry this little plaything around in your breast pocket?"

"Yes. I carry it on my person because it is a dangerous thing to leave about; the boys might get fooling with it. Besides, though I am trying to obtain some of Igbo's little preparations, I do not propose that he should lay his benign hands on any of mine. Am I dismissed, your Honor?" he ended with a smile.

"Not quite. What's the purpose of these venomous discoveries of yours?"

Carson came up close to the Policeman.

"I'll tell you, Staines. I know that you chaps regard me as something of a crazy enthusiast; but good will come of my efforts—or, as should be said in this case, evil will be avoided. Part of my work is to forestall and prevent criminal genius and invention.

"Take this compound for example. It has a sudden, irresistible action on the heart and, in animals, leaves hardly a trace—nothing that resembles ordinary phosphorus poisoning. Yet the mixture is a simple one—so simple I have often wondered why it has not been discovered already; and it is only a question of time before it *will* be discovered by some one. A bloodless prick from a syringe point—it is

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all the evidence a murderer need leave behind.

"If Science has not heard of the stuff before, the chances for the criminal's conviction are a hundred to one against; when my completed report of the compound is in the hands of the medical world those chances become a hundred to one *on*. But my report is not complete. Almost invariably with these things one can tell from experiments on animals what to expect in human cases. But not so with this.

"All my experiments, doses, time observations, and so on, are set out in my diary. I'm rather proud of the book—it contains quite a few scientific novelties. I've asked Franklin to take care of it for me if anything should happen. There are twenty-five pages there, Staines, devoted to this compound alone, but they are practically worthless.

"There's a missing link, and it's the most important one of all—the distinguishing traces on a human corpse. Until I can add that item, my report will not be published and my discovery will remain nameless. Couldn't you supply me with a condemned criminal for experimental purposes? He would really be doing some good by his death if he did nothing but evil with his life. Have you got one on hand?"

The Doctor asked this question with a laugh, but something in his embarrassed manner showed that he was not entirely joking.

"I have not," replied Staines, "and I wouldn't give him to you if I had, you horrible little butcher! Come out and play a set." The Policeman swung his racket at an imaginary ball. "I'm sick of your dirty dopes. If I listen to you much longer I'll be scared to call you in on my next go of fever, lest you select me as a subject for your noble experiments. Come out, and let me see if I can't beat your Poisonous Highness at this frivolous game."

A WORD was brought to the Station next day that some itinerant Nupees had taken to highway robbery on a large scale in a section of country to the north, where the sphere of influence of the native chiefs was doubtful and undefined. Feeling that the matter required prompt, personal attention, the Policeman sent a messenger to Franklin and started forth. Administrative responsibility for the Station and the native town thus devolved upon Carson as the only white representative left at the Residency. This procedure was not strictly official or recognized at Headquarters, but was a common practise with the Political Department in isolated, up-country stations.

That night the Medical Officer sat in the choproom of his bungalow alone. With his head on the back of the deck chair, he was frowning, deeply thoughtful, at the ceiling. All signs of the evening meal had been cleared away. The boys had ceased their clatter of washing up and the house was very still and quiet. The steward, Alao, had just retired, after placing the whisky and soda, with a small bottle of quinin capsules, on the little table at the Doctor's elbow. The ticking of a tiny clock on the sideboard and the chattering of a monkey in the corner of the room were the only sounds.

At length Carson seemed to awaken from his reverie. The monkey, apparently delighted with his master's returning interest in life, bounded across the room and up on to the Doctor's lap.

"Hullo, Fitzpatrick! You seem very gay to-night. Why don't you talk? By George, I wish you could! You ought to know these blacks well enough. I suppose your ancestors were in this charming country even before juju men; eh?"

Fitzpatrick, a small gray simian peculiar to the District, scratched himself pensively while Carson poured out a whisky and soda and took the daily five grains of quinine.

"Tell me now; what shall I do? What means would *you* employ if you wished to get something out of Igbo?"

Carson lifted the monkey from his knee and sat the little beast up on the palm of his hand.

"Tell me!"

As a chair, Fitzpatrick did not care for the Doctor's hand, and as if in answer to the question, sprang away and attempted to alight on the neck of the whisky bottle—a simple feat for him, if the bottle had not capsized. It fell with a crash, and the animal hopped around the reeking liquor in delighted dismay.

For a moment Carson stared silent and motionless at the broken glass and spreading whisky on the floor. Then his eyes moved slowly to Fitzpatrick who was

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chasing a thin stream across the room and sniffing it suspiciously.

"I never thought of that," he murmured. "But it's worth trying, you little imp. It's worth trying!"

He called for the steward and while the mess was being cleared away, pondered over the idea. As Alao prepared to leave the room the Doctor made up his mind.

"Oh, Alao; you savvy where Igbo live?" he inquired in the domestic pidgin English. The steward looked uneasy and promptly lied.

"No, sah."

"Oh, yes, you do; all black man for town savvy where Igbo live. Go tell 'um I wish for see 'um."

The inherent terror of the witch doctor was evident in Alao's almost tearful expression as he replied: "I no savvy him house, sah. He no come for me. Him fine-fine juju man, me small-small steward boy."

Carson, annoyed, got up from his chair.

"Go catch 'um," he commanded. "If he say he no come, tell 'um I send police. Doctor man all same as Resident now. Fetch Igbo here for ten o'clock; savvy?"

ALAO disappeared with an anxious face and the Doctor took to walking back and forth across the room. He knew that he was doing wrong, committing an unpardonable breach in the white man's administrative etiquette, in bringing the negro here to his house; in recognizing him; in giving him liquor as a guest; in still further showing his hand to the native priest.

He realized that he was venturing on dangerous ground, but he shut his ears and his eyes to all scruples and forebodings. He could think of only one thing: that the opportunity might never occur when the coast would be so clear, with Franklin and Staines both out of the way, himself in nominal charge of the Station and Igbo in the town! If he stayed in West Africa till he died of fever or old age he might never get such a chance again of reaching the secrets of the coveted drug; of getting this malignant wizard, this menace to public health, under his heel.

Yes, most negroes talked when they were drunk, he pondered; and if liquor wouldn't make him talk, well (the ingenuous blue eyes grew oddly hard), other methods would be employed. But he must be careful. Igbo was no fool and would never allow himself to get intoxicated if he thought his little secrets were being sought. Carson stopped in his walk and considered for a moment. Then a smile lit up his face.

He went over to a medicine chest and swung open the door. It was so long ago since he had successfully experimented to obtain a colorless, tasteless and odorless alcohol, that he had almost forgotten all about it. He took a large bottle from the top shelf. Then, half filling a glass jug from the water filter, he emptied the contents of the bottle into the jug and placed it with two tumblers upon the table. As he put back the empty bottle in the cabinet a thought seemed to strike him.

"Must guard against getting tight myself," he muttered. "That would never do."

Again he scanned the shelves, and, selecting a counter stimulant, measured himself a stiff dose and swallowed it down.

"Black man's medicine!" he sneered. "Now, Doctor Igbo, we'll give you a course of treatment worthy of your own prescription—suggested by Surgeon Fitzpatrick, your first cousin."

An hour later a gentle tap sounded on the door. When Carson said, "Come in," a short, bent figure sidled into the room and a pair of small, penetrating, sinister eyes leered upon the Doctor in a hideous effort at a smile.

It was not a nice interview. Described in careful detail it would not make pleasant reading at all. There was something sickening, primitive, degrading, about the struggle that at times nauseated even Carson, the obsessed.

At first Igbo was too cautious and wary for anything, so Carson, pretending that he himself was nearly drunk, offered the negro whisky. It was promptly and politely refused. The juju man, in the enemy's camp, was not a little uneasy; he was in fact a trifle terrified. It was one thing to rail against the white Doctor to the native horde at his own juju ceremonies; it was quite a different matter to be brought face to face with him here at the local seat of the British Government. But he refused the whisky.

CARSON, assuming annoyance at this contempt for his hospitality, mixed himself a drink and offered the other the water jug. The uproarious

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white man evidently had been drinking heavily; better pacify him, thought Igbo, by accepting the water. He swallowed a tumblerful. Then, as he felt the stimulation steal over him, his suspicions returned and he tried to escape. Carson staggered to his feet and restrained his guest, at the same time managing covertly to rifle a satchel slung from the juju man's sacred shoulders. The contents he discovered to be a small box of white powder and a damp bunch of water-weed. A faint odor from these, in that forceful, intangible way that scents can conjure up recollections, reminded him of the dying Filani woman. As he struggled genially to hold the negro back, he slipped the specimens into his own pocket and knew that the most important part of his work was accomplished.

In a moment or two, when the spirit had completed its work, Igbo reached a cheerful, expansive frame of mind in which he flattered himself that it would be fun to play with the drunken, inquisitive white man. He ceased from his efforts to get away and returned to his seat with an air of superior friendliness.

It was not much information that Carson required. He had recorded a great deal of data concerning the drug. With the powder and the plant in his pocket, and his experience in the preparation of poisons at his command, he would soon be able to piece the rest together. But there were a few points that needed clearing up; and maudlin, roundabout, but well laid questioning of the confident witch doctor soon brought enlightenment.

Carson, whose toxicological fame had often called him in on complicated European cases of poisoning, had frequently assisted at the cross examination of really scientific criminals. In such hands the convivial negro was the merest clay. The Medical Officer's eyes were half closed. He sat drooping and swaying in his chair, apparently hopelessly, soddenly drunk. But as he heard fall from the lips of his victim the unguarded information that sounded so trivial, yet put his instinct of investigation on the right track; as he reached down and grasped the box of powder in his pocket, the toxicologist found it hard work maintaining his assumed drunkenness to hide the exultation that lifted him within. He had succeeded where every one else had failed. He had gathered in the wilderness. He had been where nobody else had been. He had reached "the back of the black man's mind," and wrested Science from the very fingers of Satan!

And the means, the despicable, degrading means that he had stooped to for his object? They did not exist!

III

IN THE chill damp of the misty, tropical dawn Carson carried a snoring body from his bungalow and laid it in the "bush." No one saw him. His boys had all fled and were not likely to return till they ascertained the juju man's departure.

Through the whole night, as soon as Igbo had drunk himself into insensibility, the Doctor had worked over his laboratory table and scribbled in his journal. All that he now required to complete his report was to find the plant growing in its native habitat and a statement of conditions favorable to the annihilation or culture of the weed. That, however, could wait. Even for his inhuman zeal enough had been done for one night.

The consequent fatigue visible in the Medical Officer's face this morning when he reëntered the house and flung himself upon his bed, was terrible to contemplate. He fell asleep almost immediately and lay there motionless throughout the day till Alao (who first made sure that Igbo was no longer in the house) called him at four in the afternoon with a cup of tea. His first thought was that he must go out and hunt the plant. So, sick and weak as he was, his enthusiasm still buoyed him up. He washed hurriedly, swallowed a mouthful of food and departed.

Igbo's awakening was even less happy. The heat of the vertical midday sun roused him from an uncomfortable bed, hidden in tall grass. He stared around, totally unable to account for his location or condition. His head seemed ready to burst asunder and as he stood up he found his legs almost too shaky to bear him. A little dazed, unsteady exploration discovered a path which, when followed painfully, brought him in time to the east market of the town.

As he threaded his way through the smelly native traffic, he endeavored to recollect in sequence the happenings of the night before. Up to a certain point in the chain

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of events he was successful. Beyond that point there was no memory. He recalled most of the Doctor's questioning, he thought; but what he might have given away after all discretion left him he shuddered to conjecture. Of course the Englishman had merely pretended to be drunk! He thrust his hand into his satchel, and when he found it empty fairly spat with rage and self-contempt. Fool, idiot that he was, to carry his wares into the enemy's camp!

He reached his hut on the outskirts of the town. Till after nightfall he lay pondering on his predicament. The more he thought of it, the more dangerous his position seemed to become. Now that they were in possession of his secrets, the white men (who always made such a fuss about what they called "murder") would not long leave him unconvicted of the juju sacrifices. Nowhere in all Nigeria would he be safe from the inevitable, avenging grasp of "the men from over the sea." As he thought again of Carson's trick, hatred twisted his malformed features into a horrible grimace. There was only one thing to be done and that must be done quickly, before the other white men got back to the Station.

He refilled his satchel hastily and left the hut. By circuitous paths which avoided the town, and aided by the rising moon, he presently regained the Compound. As he crept toward the Doctor's bungalow he was discovered and stopped by the night watchman; but directly he revealed his face to the huge Yoruba, that worthy sped off in the direction of the town as if the devil were at his heels.

THIS obstacle disposed of, Igbo stole noiselessly to a lighted window and peered in through a corner of the mosquito netting. The Doctor was seated at a table in the center of the room, facing the door. The inevitable diary lay open before him. On the table, just beyond the book, stood a tumbler of water containing fresh samples of the nocuous weed which Carson had collected that afternoon. The Medical Officer was terminating his botanical description of the plant with a life-size sketch.

Igbo had seen enough. He slid away from the window and passed round to the back of the house. From the kitchen, which was situated in an outhouse and connected with the bungalow by a covered way, the chattering of the boys came to his ears. He slipped in through the open door and surprised them. Those that could, fled; but Alao, who was standing with a tray in his hands, was unable to get past the juju man. Igbo scrutinized the contents of the tray: a bottle of whisky, a soda siphon, a tumbler and a small bottle of quinin capsules.

Carson was particular about his quinin and, unlike the majority of Englishmen on the Coast, preferred to take it in powdered form. For this purpose he always brought out with him from Home airtight cases of empty, telescoping capsules, with a good supply of the hydrochlorate in powder. To avoid injury to the covers from climate, he made up only half a dozen at a time; and it was part of Alao's duties to bring the small bottle to be replenished every six days. The boy was now on his way to give his master his daily dose.

Igbo was professionally interested in the tiny gelatin boxes of white powder. He opened one and the contents fell out upon the air. A little questioning of the terrified steward soon showed the juju man that his enemy had been delivered into his hands in an unexpectedly simple manner.

Alert, lest the frightened Alao escape, the witch doctor swiftly exchanged the contents of the capsules for another white powder which he took from a small box in his satchel. He replaced the bottle on the tray and commanded the boy to take it to his master.

Alao guessed what he was being told to do, and he hesitated; but a whispered threat from the priest sent him slinking up the covered way. With the witch doctor's mesmeric eyes still on him, he opened the door of Carson's room slowly, like a lost soul entering the Inferno. Igbo glided to cover as the light flooded out, and the wretched boy put the tray down upon the table. The Doctor, absorbed, did not even look up from his work.

Hurrying out, the steward only half closed the door behind him, and stood cowering—hesitating in the shadow. He wanted to close the door but somehow he felt he was shutting it on all that life held good for him. The thought of murdering, in cold blood, the man who paid and fed him, touched even Alao's barbaric conscience. He had saved his money and was soon to

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have a wife. Now he would be a slinking fugitive from justice. He recalled the tales old women had told him, of villages and towns wiped from off the earth because the tribes had refused to surrender a white man's murderers.

All his dreams of a happy home amid the cheerful bustle of this, his native town, faded from his sight. And in their place loomed up the picture of a furtive, miserable mendicant wandering in strange lands, among unfriendly tribes, dependent on the charity of those he despised, afraid to return to his relatives or his country. No wonder that he hesitated!

Should he go back now, before it was too late, snatch the still unopened quinin bottle, and throw himself upon the mercy and protection of the Doctor? His master had always treated him well and more than once saved his life from disease; would he be strong enough to save his servant from the avenging Igbo? The boy asked himself: Should he take the fearful, unprecedented, initial step, and desert the ancient teaching of his racial traditions?

FROM the half dark behind the shivering youth, Igbo's deformed hand reached out, and as the crooked fingers clutched the trembling arm, the sinister authority grasped the hesitating mind. Alao swung round upon his heel and without even waiting to take the money he had hoarded, ran like a deer out into the bush.

Igbo remained, peering through the hinge-crack of the door. In a few moments the Doctor laid down his pencil and stretched his arms above his head with a weary sigh. He mixed himself a drink; and taking out a capsule, washed it down with a draft from the tumbler. If any odor lingered about the small bottle he did not notice it, for the same scent, coming from the plant upon the table, was already slightly noticeable in the room.

The report was finished at last. Much knowledge was, of course, yet to be gained of the drug, but he had done the important, the pioneer work which would make research possible and easy for them that came after him. He read over and corrected the new entry in his journal. It was good, he felt; it was great! If the world forgot his other little efforts it would remember this. By the way, it had no name! Like his other discovery, the fatal phosphorus compound, it had not been scientifically christened. Well, he would try to find out the native name of the weed, if it had any; that was a small matter anyhow.

He moved in his chair restlessly; the room seemed to have suddenly grown hot and stuffy. Fatigue and exhaustion enveloped him. Now that the nervous excitement was over, his enthusiastic vigor deserted him to the clutches of a terrible reaction which made the work for Igbo's poison easy. His feet seemed to have "gone to sleep." He stamped them on the floor. His knees ached; a little rheumatism, he surmised, caught while messing round the water in search of the plant. He felt dreadfully shaky and depressed.

For the first time he began to analyze the means he had used to gain his ends, and to wonder vaguely about the consequences. With some idea of getting himself a restorative he tried to rise from his chair, but a horrible convulsion gripped his legs and he sank back in a chill of fear.

He shouted for Alao, and felt that the muscles of his face were twitching. Then as the grinning Igbo pushed open the door in answer to his call, the whole hideous truth swept down on him. The convulsions and loss of control over the lower limbs, the premature *risus sardonicus*, the gloating fiend before him—all heralds of death—announced the news to his shuddering consciousness. Poisoned like a dog by this filthy fakir! Emetics within reach if he might walk and fight! Franklin and Staines both gone! Hoist with his own petard!

But it was characteristic of the extraordinary man that the gruesome irony of his plight did not strike him half so forcibly as did the danger in which his accomplished work, his precious diary, now lay. He guessed at once what it was that the juju man had stayed for: possession of the book and specimens, obliteration of all traces of the Doctor's work on "black man's medicine."

A weapon! What could he use? Carson cudgeled his tired brain. What could he use to defend his work for White Science? He spread his arms over the book and tried to think for a moment, while Igbo, waiting for his enemy's collapse, taunted him from a safe distance.

"You be fine, big, white Doctor! You savvy plenty; Igbo savvy more. You go

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steal Igbo's Ilari; you make black man drunk for last night. Now Ilari catch you!"

Carson grasped his pencil covertly and scribbled in a corner of the page above the sketch, "Native name, Ilari, E-e-l-a-h-r-e-e."

"You think Igbo no good," the negro continued. "Now black man's medicine catch white Doctor for stomach, eh?" ("A weapon! Anything!" Carson prayed.) "No fit for walk, eh? Face no proper, eh? Igbo savvy plenty fine medicine; me have box make 'um sick, me have bottle make 'um well; look 'um!"

THE juju man held up a dirty medicine bottle filled with yellow liquid, and waved the antidote tantalizingly beyond Carson's reach; then smashed it on the floor and laughed.

Again the doctor's hand twitched imperceptibly. "The antidote," he jotted. "Don't let the work stop. Get the antidote."

But all the time his brain was striving, seeking, searching for a weapon. Any means to rescue his work; his work, which had been his life, his soul, and was now to be his passport to Peace. If he might have naturally thought of his own safety first, which is indeed doubtful, he had by this time given up all hope of saving or curing himself. But the journal! That *must* be saved. He shouted again for the boys. No answer. Of course the cowardly little devils had all gone!

"When white man die," Igbo went on, "juju man go burn 'um book for market place. Nobody savvy Igbo kill white Doctor. Massa Staines and Massa Franklin go for up-country. All 'um steward boy run for bush; everybody 'fraid of juju man. Igbo go burn white Doctor's book for market and all black man laugh!"

Carson groaned: "A weapon! Dear God! Give me something to smash this beast!"

The poison and the convulsions were fast reducing him. He was in great pain. Only the muscles of his shoulders and arms remained to his control. He began to feel dull, stupid and incompetent; the end could not be far off now, he thought.

Then suddenly through the gathering, black cloud of his despair the thought cleft like an illuminating lightning flash—*the glass tube.* His own phosphoric compound! The deadliest toxin known! Why had he not thought of it before? Who knows? If he had time, if his constitution held out long enough against the Ilari, with luck he might yet add the missing link to that other chain of research—"the distinguishing traces on a human corpse." How grimly appropriate to have Igbo for his long-desired subject of experiment!

The thought acted on his weakening intellect like a tonic. A plan evolved; and in the fraction of a second his old, intense enthusiasm returned rejuvenated and whipped up his faltering faculties for one final, supreme, uttermost effort. No other man in that condition could have done it. But Carson was being robbed of his work, and no tigress guarding her cubs could have been more enduringly tenacious, more pitilessly cunning. As Franklin had said, in these things Carson had no balance; and as long as one single cell of his brain remained active, he meant to fight!

With a groan he clutched at his heart; and from his chest his hand slid easily down into his breast pocket. He touched the clasp of the hypodermic case; carefully his searching fingers extricated the tube and grasped the large end. Then he let his head fall back, and appeared to collapse, unconscious.

Seeing the Doctor apparently incapable, Igbo immediately advanced. Slowly and timidly, palm upward, his hand slid forward over the table to grasp the top of the book. From beneath their hanging lashes, Carson's professional eyes selected the large vein; then like the strike of a scorpion his hand shot out, and the pointed tube sank deep into the negro's forearm. Igbo sprang back with a yell of pain, yet he was evidently unaware of the nature of his wound, for he came again at his enemy like a raging fiend.

But his physique was poor; and while Carson fought the clawing hands from off the book he managed to strike again and again with the dripping tube. Soon the struggles diminished; a vacant, foolish look came into the negro's eyes; his hand went to his throat, he choked for breath, reeled, and fell lifeless by the Doctor's chair.

HE FELL face upward, and his naturally grotesque countenance, with the open, staring eyes, was horrible to look upon. But not for Carson;

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the toxicologist was again on a scientific trail—the last one—with little time to spare. Snatching up his pencil he scribbled like one possessed:

"See pp. 60-70, my phosphorus comp.; missing description post-mortem traces in human case."

He looked at the corpse; the shadow from the table lay over it. Taking a box of matches from his pocket, he reached down and held a light over the body to find some evidence that would identify his poison's work. Nothing! The limbs lay calm and natural; the open eyes were the only abnormal feature. He examined the repulsive mask. As the match burned lower, he whimpered and whined in delirious disappointment. At last, with the flame burning his fingers, he detected, in the faintly discolored whites of the negro's eyes, what he needed. A hoarse gasp of exultation escaped him before he swung round to his book, and scrawled: "Here it is: body resembles natural death—eyes open—pupils not dilated, but *sclera slightly green around the iris*. Good-by!"

There was none to share his triumph, none to shower honors on his victory. But what did it matter now if Franklin, Staines and all the lay world called him an unbalanced fanatic? His work would live!

And bringing this thought to soothe his suffering, the Omnipotent Spirit of Science leaned over the drooping shoulders and told him gently that the End had come; that his book was safe now; he need not worry—Franklin would find it; that the work he had begun would be carried on by others, encouraged by his example, while he rested in the laurel shade of Achievement. So, alone with the grim relics of Mortality, still hugging the precious journal to his revolting body, he realized for himself a more nearly immortal reward than the sublimity of a legion-guarded, conquering Cæsar marching to the welcome of the Senate.

A smile—a sigh . . . and then his head fell forward on the book between his stiffening arms.

THE little clock on the Doctor's sideboard had just tinkled the hour of nine when a hatless, dirty horseman galloped into the moonlit Compound on a ruined mount. It would have been hard to recognize the calm, self-possessed Franklin under the dust of the breathless rider. He had stopped for only one meal and a change of horses since Staines' messenger had reached him. On the way down, the uncanny presentment he had taken away had seemed unaccountably to persist and grow on him, till at last the Resident had no longer tried to spare his animal, and had galloped and spurred as if to save his friend's life. But now, even before he dismounted from the broken beast, something intangible about the awful hush lying over the deserted Compound told his anxious intuition that he had come too late.

A month later a little plain stone slab, sent out from England, was taken up by Staines and Franklin, half a mile behind the Residency, and reverently placed over a small hump in the tiny cemetery of the white men. It still tells the visitor, "Here lie the remains of Medical Officer Charles Carson, who died in His Majesty's Civil Service."

But this is not his real epitaph; that is only to be found in the "British Pharmacopœia" and the corresponding reference books of other countries. That year the new editions displayed two heretofore unknown drugs. If I told you the toxicologist's real name you would know where to seek them; but I may not disclose the actual nomenclature. One is called, we will say, *Ilarus Carsonicus*. The other, the deadly phosphorus compound, relied on its chemical term for identification; it was derived from its constituents. Franklin, the Ironic but Untechnical, was grieved to hear this. He tried very hard to get the authorities to christen it *"Æthiopis Medicina;"* he said he was sure that's how Carson would have wished it named—"Black Man's Medicine!"

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A GENTLEMAN FROM THE SEA

by **STEPHEN CHALMERS**

SYNOPSIS—Following his sack of Panama, the English buccaneer **Captain Harry Morgan** is charged with piracy. Although it is understood that Morgan's sovereign, **King Charles II,** has arranged for an acquittal in return for a share in the loot, nevertheless Morgan brings two of his followers to England with him as witnesses for the defense.

They are **Grog's Boy,** a youth born and brought up on a buccaneer ship, and old **Third Grog,** who saved him from death when a baby and reared him. Morgan and Third Grog furnish the youth with proofs that he is really the son of **Sir Richard Warfield,** and as such is heir to the family estates and to the title of Baronet. Meantime, however, these have passed to Grog's Boy's cousin, **Gregory.** King Charles announces that the issue shall be decided by letting the rivals themselves "fight it out," the winner also to have the hand of **Mistress Laura Fernleigh,** whose estates adjoin those of the Warfields.

CHAPTER VII

ENTER THE HIGHWAYMAN

ABOUT a week later, Sir Richard and Third Grog having spent a few days in London for the purpose of acquiring costumes less conspicuous in England, they arrived late one afternoon at the village of Fernleigh in Warwickshire. They had traveled from London Town by chaise.

Fernleigh, a hamlet situated upon the estate surrounding Fernleigh Hall, lay within five miles of another hamlet, Warfield, which took its name from Fernleigh's neighboring estate of Wārfield Towers.

It was Sir Richard's plan to arrive at his ancestral halls at a suitable hour for the transaction of business with his cousin. He might have pressed on to Warfield Village, slept at the inn there and advanced upon Sir Gregory in the morning, but he did not wish his arrival to reach Gregory's ears before he himself reached Gregory's presence.

Besides, Fernleigh Village was upon Fernleigh lands and it appealed to Richard's growing sentiment to stop overnight in an atmosphere which to his fancy suggested himself as the guest of Mistress Laura Fernleigh, although he supposed her to be in London Town.

But, after all, he was destined to press on to Warfield that night. It was the landlord of Fernleigh Inn who, in his eagerness for custom, defeated his own end and wrought the change in Sir Richard's plan. The landlord received the buccaneers with a beaming countenance and at once congratulated them upon stopping where they did.

"Aye, aye, gentlemen," said he, "you do well to pass the night here. 'Tis perilous to cross the heath after dusk. Three nights hath Captain Death waylaid the road, suffering none to pass until all have shown him their purses."

"What!" shouted Third Grog, blazing up. "A highwayman! And think ye, Master Landlord, that we be afeared o' any road pirate? Burn me, Boy, if I'll have any

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white-livered swab think I'm feared to clear the haven 'cause there's a strange sail in the offing. What say, you, Boy?"

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" pleaded the landlord: "If you meet Captain Death in that mood he will shoot ye both dead. As ye love life, stay here until the morrow, for ye would even have to pass the night at Warfield, profiting none for five miles and risking your sweet lives."

The landlord's pleading infuriated Third Grog, and Sir Richard began to sense an adventure. Besides, this highwayman must either be a thorn in Fernleigh's flesh or a fine insult to Warfield, for the entire road was upon the two estates.

"By Harry, Grog, y'are right!" said he. "Postboy!" he cried. "We go on to Warfield!"

So they got into the chaise again and, despite the pleadings of the landlord, who had profited much by this highwayman's blocking of the road after nightfall, they resumed their journey.

"If I be master of Warfield," said Sir Richard, laughing, "'twere my first duty to send this gentleman o' the road to wider seas or the gallows."

"We be buccaneers," said Third Grog, who had a different viewpoint, "an' happen no lubber of a road-thief will put a shot across our bows. Clear for action, burn ye!" And the old rogue loosened his cutlas in its scabbard, while Sir Richard glanced at the priming of his pistol.

THE dusk had been thick when they left Fernleigh Inn and it was dark before they had gone two miles. Exactly halfway between Fernleigh and Warfield a black shadow suddenly cleared a ditch by the roadside and came to a standstill in the middle of the way. It was a black horse mounted by a black-clad man wearing a black mask. He looked like Death.

"Halt!" cried the highwayman in a clear, resonant voice. "Stand from within and deliver your purses!"

The horse, the man and an extended hand holding a horse pistol were clearly silhouetted against the evening sky. The postboy brought the chaise to an immediate stop and began to plead mercy.

But the words had hardly fallen from the highwayman's lips when there came an explosion from the side of the chaise. The young buccaneer was ever a fair shot, but it was luck more than skill that directed Richard's bullet straight upon the lock of the highwayman's pistol. The weapon flew from the latter's hand, exploding as it did so. Through a cloud of powder smoke they could hear the highwayman cursing and gasping like one in pain.

At the same time Third Grog slipped out at the other side of the chaise, stumped rapidly around the post-horse's head and seized the bridle of the black animal. With a naked cutlas he threatened the highwayman with a thrust if he did not at once dismount.

The highwayman obeyed without a word other than a continuance of cursing as he exercised a half paralyzed arm. The arm was untouched, but suffering from the numbness of shock.

"Why, sink me for a Diego!" cried Grog. "Y'are a fool, ye piratin' lubber. *We be buccaneers!*"

"Buccaneers!" cried the highwayman, forgetting his arm in his astonishment, or whatever it was that struck him.

"Aye, buccaneers!" said Third Grog, while a sound of laughter came from within the chaise. "We be gentlemen o' the sea an' eat the like o' you!"

There was silence. Then the highwayman leaned against the black horse and burst out in a roar of merry laughter.

"Marry, come up!" he hiccoughed. "Buccaneers! I ha' caught a pair o' Tatars. The biter's bit! Hail, gentlemen o' the sea. Behold in me a brother of the road. Now I defy ye to send me to the assizes, for I'll wager your own neck hath been in peril."

In the chaise Sir Richard was doubled up with merriment, perceiving which the highwayman tactfully went off in another fit of laughter.

"Aye, aye!" chuckled a voice from the vehicle. "Our necks ha' been in such peril our mouths taste sour to think of it."

Whereupon Sir Richard descended from the chaise. Taking the vehicle's lantern he held it up to the highwayman's face. The gentleman of the road was tall and slim. Such of his countenance as they could see for the mask was clean shaven. The mouth was good-natured and revealed fine, white teeth as he laughed. In his voice there was something one would not have listened for in a robber.

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AS SIR RICHARD looked at the man he was aware that a pair of bright, dark eyes were regarding him through the slits in the mask.

"Ye seem a merry fellow," said Richard. "Third Grog, put up the steel. 'Twere an ungracious salute to a brother. But hark to me, Master Highwayman! Your neck is safe by the law of the buccaneer, but by that same law ye must not cruise in my waters. Which shall it be—beat to open sea or swing at the cross-roads?"

"If I take your meaning," said the highwayman with the utmost coolness, "my life is safe upon my promise to take the road in another County. Marry, then! Who steals my purse steals what I stole from another, but who takes my life robs me of my purse, my good name and all else. I go!"

"Good!" said Sir Richard, pleased with the fellow's bearing. "Luck be with you, and here's to adventure!"

"And here's to loot!" said Third Grog.

"'Tis a good toast," said the highwayman coolly, "but somewhat dry. Wet it!" And he produced a flask of aqua vitæ.

Sir Richard, oddly interested in the man and wishing (yet somehow deterred from asking) that he would remove his mask, took the proffered flask and held it up to the brightening stars.

"The toast of the buccaneer!" he cried jocularly, and recited:

Here's to the buccaneer, brave and bold!
Death to the Diego, no dearth to his hold!
Drink, one and all,
"Amain! For Whitehall!"
When I out with my steel he must out with his gold!

"Brave!" cried the highwayman, passing the flask to Third Grog. The old buccaneer wiped his mouth, cleared his throat and spouted the following:

There's some corpses lyin' for'ard,
A frigate on the lee,
A rope a danglin' from a yard,
But the wind'ard berth is free.
If the wind will hold,
We'll hide the gold,
To —— wi' the King's navee.

"Brave! Brave and hearty!" shouted the highwayman, slapping his thigh. "Here, give me!" he added, taking the flask and holding it aloft to a toast:

Pull to the purses and dare to the deed.
Heart to the rider and stay to the steed.
Rot to the rope and a blight on the tree;
And here's to the hangman who never hangs me!

"Here," quoth Third Grog with much feeling; "here be a man, Boy, as ha' wasted the talents Heaven ha' given him. What a buccaneer he'd 'a' made!"

So, in the best of feeling, the two buccaneers parted with their fellow of the road. The latter swung himself into his saddle and, ere he disappeared after a flying leap across the ditch, he waved his black-plumed bonnet and cried—

"Until we meet again, gentlemen of the sea!"

WITHIN the hour Third Grog and Sir Richard, both in high humor, reached the village of Warfield and alighted before the Sign of the Apple and Flagon.

At a shout from the postboy the door of the inn opened and a fat man, illumined by a lantern which he carried, was framed in the entrance. At once Third Grog gave a gasp and grabbed Sir Richard by the arm.

"B-boy!" he stammered. "Mermaids and sea-spooks! Look at that! 'Tis the ghost o' brother Medley or hisself growed young again."

Now Grog's Boy never knew that Third Grog had a brother, so his surprise was double now. He looked at the man in the doorway. He was obviously the landlord, but Sir Richard fancied he did see in him a resemblance to Third Grog—like what Third Grog might have been thirty years before.

"Welcome, my lords!" cried the landlord.

As they entered the inn Third Grog's cheek was pale and his eyes, wide and staring, were upon the landlord's face.

"Happen ye be main tired," said that worthy. "Or did ye meet that malignant blackleg as is ruinin' me and a giving of my custom to that cheat-the-miller by Fernleigh?"

"Wh-what do they call ye?" said Third Grog.

"My name be John Holly," replied the landlord, "an' were it not that merriment were out o' joint in Cromwell's time I would ha' called the inn the 'Holly and Mistletoe,' for Holly's my name and here be Christmas cheer the year round. But as the Gospel says, 'Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples——' "

"Avast!" roared Third Grog. "Avast! Had ye a father?"

"Aye, my gamecock, which ye never had

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yerself from the cut o' yer gill," returned the landlord, testily.

"What were his name, burn ye?"

Third Grog looked so fierce that the landlord wilted.

"Medley, sir. Medley Holly were my father, as were killed at Worcester on the side of the King, God save him."

"Now, look ye!" shouted Third Grog, "an' careful how ye speak. Did yer father, Medley, have a brother?"

"He had."

"As were 'pprenticed to a tailor an' fled to sea arter smashin' of his master with a clo'es-iron?"

"The same, but, axin' pard'n, 'twere with a ironin'-*board* as he smote the tailor," said the landlord.

"What were his name?" demanded Third Grog, madly excited.

"His name——" began the landlord.

Then he fell to scratching his head.

"His name were——Dang it! It ha' slipped me for the nonce."

"Don't tell me as how you've forgot it, too!" wailed Grog. "I know 'twere a hard name to make fast to—a main cruel name. But think, man, *think!*"

"Melanchthon!" suddenly cried the landlord.

"What!" yelled Third Grog, while Sir Richard stood by amazed and amused.

"Melanchthon. That were it—Melanchthon," said John Holly.

"Boy!" cried Third Grog, and tears welled into the old buccaneer's eyes. "It's come back! It's come back! That were my name. I be Melanchthon Holly! Look at him!"

He pointed excitedly at the fat landlord, whose eyes were like saucers all at once.

"Look at him! He be the bosom of my fambly!"

"Hold! Hold!" cried the landlord.

"Avast, ye young swab!" retorted Grog. "Don't I know my rights? Don't I know my own neffy? That be you. I be Melanchthon as smashed the tailor, an' burn ye, it were a *clo'es-iron,* no ironin'-board! Pipe all hands an' sarve rum!"

"Where were ye born?" inquired the landlord, suspiciously. "That ye should know as well as I."

"At Tawstock, in Devon, ye young swab!" said Third Grog, who was now impatient to enter into the bosom of his family. "Tawstock, where yer father an' me tore each other's hair afore you had a squawk in ye. How a Holly come into this part o' England happen ye can tell me?"

That was enough for the landlord, who had moved northward after his father's death at Worcester. John Holly set down the lantern and shouted through the inn.

"Mariar! Molly! Come an' buss my uncle—my uncle Melanchthon as was lost an' is found, an' is come home from the sea!"

THEN there followed a great to-do. Sir Richard was left to his own devices, forgotten alike by Third Grog and the landlord. Mrs. Holly submitted to the embraces of the hoary old buccaneer, as she did to everything that was put upon her in life. She was a thin, worn-out woman—the woman without salt, who toils machine-like through a life of monotony. But the daughter, Molly, was after her father—a buxom wench with good teeth, rosy cheeks and bright eyes.

"Why, bless my boots!" cried Third Grog, holding her at arms' length. "You be a siren, lass. Buss me, Holly Molly!"

"Molly Holly," corrected the landlord.

"An' I says *Holly Molly!*" snorted Third Grog, glaring at his "neffy." "Lass, I be yer grandfather-once-removed, in a manner o' speaking. Buss me again! An'——Burn me, where's that Boy? Here, Boy!" catching sight of Sir Richard. "Buss him, lass. He be my Boy. Eh, Boy, ye never knowed the taste o' a English lass till now. Buss her, ye swab!"

And Sir Richard, after one glance at Molly's laughing eyes, rushed forward and performed the ceremony.

"Now we'll ha' a supper as ever was!" said Third Grog, like one intoxicated, whose world can not move fast enough to please. He was not satisfied to let his new-found relatives out of sight, but must follow them to the kitchen, where for the next half hour Sir Richard could hear his voice roaring, bullying, commanding and exclaiming.

Sir Richard, feeling more lonesome for that one kiss of the lass, entered what he took to be the traveler's private dining room. It had windows looking out upon the orchard, which hid the stables, and there was another door besides that which gave entrance from the hall. This second door suggested the occasions when a gentleman

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night wish to enter without ostentation or depart in a hurry.

Presently Holly Molly—that is, Molly Holly—came tiptoeing in upon a pretense of discovering the handsome young buccaneer's needs.

"Art indeed my cousin?" she asked, her face radiant with smiles.

Sir Richard took care to seize both her hands and imprint another "cousinly" salute before he explained that he was not exactly, but——

"'Tis as it were the same," he assured her, "or rather I might be your uncle, for Grog—that is, your granduncle—brought me up from a baby."

Just then the rear door flew open. Holly Molly, after one glance, wrenched her hands loose and fled from the room. Sir Richard turned and beheld a striking person who seemed surprised, even startled, to discover some one in that particular room. Possibly the expression on his face was on account of the little scene he had broken into.

Then he smiled and bowed, laying his bonnet upon the table. Sir Richard studied him without actually staring. There was that about this man which strangely touched his instincts. He was tall, dressed like a gentleman, and had a smooth, refined, scholarly face. Despite his slightly grand bearing, he was quite young.

In response to the stranger's summons Landlord Holly appeared. He, too, seemed suddenly uneasy about something. The stranger waved his hand toward Sir Richard as if suggesting introduction. The landlord caught the hint, but became more confused when he discovered that he did not know Sir Richard's name.

"Master Seabird," said the buccaneer, having no mind to reveal himself yet.

"And this gentleman," said Landlord Holly, glancing helplessly at the stranger whose dark eyes were fixed upon him, "is Master—Master——"

"Gosling, the scrivener," supplied the stranger with a laugh. He promptly begged Sir Richard to join him in a cup of wine which, when brought, was quaffed with hardly a word. But the stranger's eyes seldom left the other's face.

FINALLY Master Gosling picked up his bonnet and retired by that rear door at which he had entered. In the doorway he turned with a smile that revealed a line of even, white teeth.

"Good-night, Sir Dickon Warfield," said he, jocularly. "Beware your cousin, Sir Gregory. He is a sorry rogue!"

And swinging his bonnet with a grace that was oddly familiar to Richard he disappeared. Then Sir Richard started. He knew the man now and he called himself a fool.

"'Twas the highwayman!" he exclaimed, bringing down his hand upon the table with a slap. "But how does he know me, and——?"

Holly Molly's merry face and tidy figure reappeared in the other doorway.

"At your lordship's service," said she, with a mock curtsy and her right forefinger on her dimpling chin.

Sir Richard made a dive for her; and in the next few minutes he forgot the highwayman, forgot Sir Gregory, and remembered Mistress Laura Fernleigh only as he fancied her in the person of laughing Holly Molly.

CHAPTER VIII

SIR GREGORY WARFIELD

WITHIN two hours after supper that night Sir Richard Warfield told Molly Holly that he loved her, and Molly, temporarily believing that she herself was permanently smitten, allowed his arm to draw her close and her own head to rest upon the buccaneer's broad shoulder.

In extenutation of this sudden development, some explanation is necessary more than that both were young, that it was a fine Summer night and that a sympathetic moon cast argent bars down through the apple trees in the orchard where the mutual declarations were made.

The explanation is in the psychology of love. Love is a queer thing, as poets and story-tellers have been proclaiming ever since Eve flirted with the Serpent, while Adam sawed wood; but it is so much queerer than is generally granted that in some specific cases it is almost beyond comprehension.

For eight long days Sir Richard had moved and lived in a rose-colored world. He had not slept the night after meeting Mistress Laura Fernleigh at Whitehall, and next day he had awakened to that changed identity of mind, soul and body which any one who has ever fallen in love will

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identify as symptoms of a violent attack. Third Grog attributed the alteration in his comrade's bearing to the change in his social status.

"Burn me if his new riggin' ain't top-heavy!" was the old buccaneer's diagnosis.

After a week Mistress Laura's name was all Richard was sure of, for oddly—as some might say—he could not clearly recall her face. It is a fact that one can recall faces of persons one cares little about, but the countenance of the beloved defies mental conjuring, despite what poets may say of "the haunting face."

Yet although he could not bring the object of his sudden love into mental focus, Mistress Laura had, all unconsciously, sown the seed in his heart and the little flower of love was growing despite the absence of her who planted it.

Possibly, in his heart, the Sir Richard who was evolving from Grog's Boy contemned his own fickleness, being unaware that in wooing Holly Molly he was but lavishing upon her the necessary expression of a pregnant heart. When a man loves a woman he should be swift to tell her so, lest he tell the same thing to another woman. Love is not so much for an object as it is a state of being; and love must seek expression, even as at Springtime the trees must burgeon whether they will or no.

Thus Sir Richard Warfield found Mistress Laura in Holly Molly and caressed her under the apple trees.

But what of Holly Molly? Was she suddenly in love with the handsome Master Seabird, or was hers another case of a heart influenced by moonlight and giving to Richard the flower that she had secretly watered in her heart for another?

It might be so, for the tyrant Jealousy came with the god of Love and Richard suddenly remembered how she had guiltily plucked her hands from his when Master Gosling, the scrivener, broke in upon their first little scene. And he remembered, too, a peculiar expression upon the face of Master Gosling when he perceived them.

"Molly," said Richard, "is Master Gosling a lover of yours?"

Molly lifted her head from his shoulder and the moonlight fell upon her eyes, lighting the change from absent tenderness to slow surprise.

"Master Gosling?" she echoed. "Who is this Master Gosling?"

"The highwayman, then," said Richard. She drew back from him and stared.

"I love no highwayman!" said she.

"Methought ye seemed sore put out when he saw your two hands in mine. Confess now, lass. Ye fancy him—or did?"

"Oh!" said Holly Molly, understanding dawning upon her face. She had merely been confused about identities. "What if I did fancy him? I am but an innkeeper's daughter."

SIR RICHARD suddenly awoke from the nympholeptic trance into which love had entrapped him. He looked up at the moon and thought again of himself and Mistress Laura. He did not understand, but the gentle melancholy of his condition suddenly changed to self-reproach.

"But y'are good enough for a buccaneer? So?"

Holly Molly fell silent. She, too, looked at the moon and her good sense came to the rescue. The spell was broken; they were standing apart. Suddenly she burst out in a peal of merriment and rushed away through the orchard toward the kitchen door.

Richard pursued her, caught her in the shadow of the inn and kissed her once more as a playful cousin might.

"We are moonstruck!" said he, laughing.

"I think we be—and the platters not cleaned from supper," said Molly.

And so it ended as it had begun—in play. But had they seriously given the incident thought they would have surmised that they had passed through a strange experience in that hour and had only by chance strayed out of, as they had strayed into, the labyrinth of love's mystery.

But that hour was to have its sequel before long. Nothing happens in any part of a life that has not its effect upon the rest of it, and the little passage in the orchard had not passed altogether unnoticed by fate—or Third Grog.

The old buccaneer, suspecting the reason of Molly's and Richard's absence, had helped his comrade along the road to complications by holding Landlord Holly and Maria in the thrall of strange adventure-narrative in the kitchen.

Later, as he and Richard prepared to retire, Third Grog poked the young buccaneer in the ribs and chuckled:

"Ah, Boy, I had my weather eye on the

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orchard. Molly be a fine lass, and if she even fancies you, why, Boy—" he slapped Richard heartily on the shoulder—"she's yours! But mark ye this," he added with a comical head-of-the-family air, "no fast-and-loose play with that lass. It's take her or leave her, and that's *what!*"

Richard stared at the old man as if he thought Third Grog had taken leave of his senses. Then he burst out laughing.

"By Harry!" he cried. "Happen Landlord Holly has struck his colors. I suppose ye will change the sign next."

Third Grog looked mystified for a moment. Then his face brightened.

"Burn me if that be n't a good idee," he muttered.

"The Sign of the Three Jorums," Richard suggested.

"I'll even think about that, too," said Grog gravely, as he unstrapped his leg, preparatory for bed.

NEXT morning Richard was up early. This day he must meet his cousin and he wished to think over the plan of advance. But knowing little or nothing of Sir Gregory, he could see no course but to direct his tactics upon whatever reception he might get upon his arrival at the Towers.

He laughed softly at the memory of the previous night as he strolled through the stable-orchard and toward the stables. There, in the byre, he found Holly Molly sitting on a stool with a luggie in her lap, milking into it from a ruminating cow.

He hailed her with merry banter, asking her if she had lain awake and sighing all night.

"If I did, 'twas for a better lad than you be," retorted Molly, but with eyes averted.

"Come lass," said he, seeing she was put out, "be not angry with me. Happen it was the moon and we are both young. And what is a fair-exchanged kiss where our mood was the same? Think ye I will gossip, lass?"

"No," she said, "but I am grieved with myself that I should ha' been a fool."

"Lass, ye have a great heart, and it hath a wealth of love in it. But I see plain 'tis not for me, but for some other."

Her face softened, but she avoided answering by turning the same statement upon himself.

"I will even admit it," said he, looking down upon her as she milked the cow. "Happen ye have seen Mistress Laura Fernleigh? 'Tis she I hunger for, Molly."

The luggie of milk nearly dropped from Holly Molly's lap, she was so astonished. She whirled around on the stool and looked up at him.

"Master Seabird," said she, "go about your business and leave me to mine. If you knew or had seen Mistress Laura Fernleigh, ye would know that she is not for you any more than Molly Holly is for the King of England. Y'are a fool, Master Seabird, and ye caw like a rook!"

Richard laughed and fled from the indignant Molly, who felt that she had been made fun of all along. He explored the rest of the outbuildings and presently returned, chuckling about something, to the inn. There he found Third Grog giving directions about breakfast. Landlord Holly and Maria seemed to have fallen completely under the old rogue's sway.

Richard seized an opportunity, when Grog and Maria were out, to tap the landlord on the shoulder from behind and whisper in his ear:

"Master Gosling rides a fine black horse. Happen a man who hath such a beast might well keep it in his own stable."

Landlord Holly dropped a dish and turned a suddenly colorless face upon Third Grog's protégé. But Richard had left the room.

"He knows 'tis the highwayman's!" Master Holly groaned within himself. "Now Heaven 'fend me! What else does he know?"

But Richard suspected little and cared less. It merely amused him to think that the landlord of the Apple and Flagon was an accomplice of the gentleman of the road who stabled his horse in the stalls behind the inn.

After breakfast Third Grog and Sir Richard announced to the landlord that they were about to call upon Sir Gregory Warfield at Warfield Towers and begged that they be directed thither.

Master Holly was staggered, but he had been more or less staggered for the last twelve hours. In a dazed voice he told the buccaneers that they had but to follow the road a few rods and they would come upon the gates of Warfield, though he doubted if they would get beyond them with the lodge-keeper's permission.

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"Huh!" snorted Grog, loosening up his cutlas.

As Holly had anticipated, they found the gates locked, but Third Grog hammered upon the bars with the back of his blade and a very aged servitor appeared from a little lodge among the trees beyond.

"And who may ye be?" he demanded suspiciously.

"What, varlet!" roared Grog, brandishing the weapon at the face behind the gate. "Open to Sir Richard Warfield, ye old crab!"

"Sir Richard Warfield?" echoed the old man. Then he burst out in a high-pitched "He, he, he! Ho, ho, ho! Ha——" But the senile laughter ended in a gasp, as the old man turned his purblind eyes from Third Grog to the younger buccaneer.

"Wh-who's there!" he cried. "Who is standing behind ye? Heaven forgive me! 'Tis Sir Richard himself. 'Tis my dear master as he were when he brought his lady home. Tell me! Tell me! How is this?"

Then Richard spoke up.

"Aye, indeed, old man. I am my father come to life again, as you might say. I am his son and rightfully Sir Richard, and I come to speak with my cousin, Sir Gregory. Open!"

The old servitor unlocked the gates and young Sir Richard stood in full view before him. The white-haired retainer looked at him with bulging eyes, into which crept marvel mingled with tears. All at once he fell on both knees at Sir Richard's feet and, seizing the young buccaneer's hands, kissed them fervently.

"My master! Oh, my young master!" he cried.

They left him kneeling on the ground before his lodge with his withered arms extended after Sir Richard, as the young buccaneer-Baronet and Third Grog passed up the broad drive leading to the Towers.

FIVE minutes later they came in sight of them, ancient piles lifting time-honored heads above ivy-mantled, weather-stained walls. Age sat with a venerable grace upon everything. The very oak trees seemed to have grown out of the dawn of time, and a suggestion of abandonment of what had once been well-groomed lawns bettered the effect of decay.

Third Grog, who had been boldest in the beginning, now showed signs of uneasiness; but the younger buccaneer stiffened his shoulders and marched boldly up a broad flight of stairs. A massive door swung inward and a lackey appeared in the entrance with his chin tilted in contemptuous inquiry. That promptly effected Third Grog's recovery of nerve.

"Heave to, ye Diego!" said he, advancing fiercely upon the lackey. "Now put about an' we'll follow in yer wake. To the cabin aft and summon the Capting of this craft."

The lackey continued to regard the buccaneers disdainfully, whereupon Third Grog, unused to argument, especially of the silent sort, whipped out his handy cutlas and clapped the point to the servant's ample stomach.

"Heave away, an' lively does it!" he barked.

The lackey's dignity fell from him like a mantle. He retired—fled, rather—leaving the door wide open. The two buccaneers entered an ancient hall, the ceiling of which was lost in darkness. Third Grog started away from a suit of beaten armor which arose threateningly at his right.

The lackey had disappeared up a flight of stairs, which was illumined from a mullioned window.

Sir Richard, deeply impressed but unafraid, found an open door to the left and passed through it, followed by Grog. Beyond was a splendid room, paneled with oak, with an immense fireplace and bright from the light of three great windows that looked out upon old gardens. On one side of the room was a case of shelves lined with books. The walls on three sides were decorated with relics of the past—old swords, pistols, harquebuses and different kinds of armor.

There was but one picture in the room and that was over the case of books. It was a painting. The moment Sir Richard looked at it, he knew instinctively that it was a likeness of his father.

"Aye, aye!" whispered Third Grog, who had turned to discover Richard wrapped in thought. "That's him—yer father, Boy, as sent a dozen of us to Tophet wi' Mungo Matthews' cutlas. 'Ah, there was a man, Boy!"

A LIGHT step sounded behind them. Sir Richard and Third Grog spun around, the old man half raising his naked blade. In the middle of the room stood a gentleman in velvet and

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ace, silk stockings and silver-buckled shoes, and with a light rapier dangling at his left side.

He was tall and graceful, with cavalier curls of glossy black, warm, vital eyes of a deep hue, a clear, smooth skin, a mouth that was at once strong, weak, humorous and hard—swiftly mobile, in short; and as he smiled upon the two visitors he displayed a row of even, white teeth.

"Thunder and lightnin'!" gasped Third Grog, lowering his blade.

"Sir Richard Warfield?" said the gentleman pleasantly, advancing upon Grog's Boy.

"I am Sir Richard Warfield," said the young buccaneer slowly, for the man who greeted him was no other than Master Gosling, highwayman on the road and scrivener at the inn. "And you?"

"I," said the highwayman, unabashed, "am Sir Gregory Warfield."

CHAPTER IX

CONCERNING COUSINLY AFFECTION

SIR GREGORY WARFIELD'S gravity, or rather his smiling composure, suddenly gave way. He put his hands to his sides and all at once the great house rang with a shout of the heartiest laughter Richard had ever heard in his life.

The young buccaneer decided upon the instant that he liked his cousin, Gregory, and that a man who could laugh like that could have no enemy in all the world.

Sir Gregory's merriment waxed the greater as he saw the amazement on the faces of his two visitors. He reeled and dropped into a chair, and there he lay convulsed until the tears coursed down his cheeks.

No one could listen to that contagious mirth and not be affected by it. Before ten seconds had elapsed, Sir Richard and the old buccaneer were guffawing like a pair of Spanish burros. What tickled their risibility most was the memory of the jovial highwayman of the road who, it now appeared, was none other than Sir Gregory Warfield himself.

"Did ye know 'twas your cousin ye would ha' robbed?" asked Richard between gasps.

"N-not I!" hiccoughed Gregory; "not till I saw ye at the inn and tried ye with the name."

"But I might ha' killed ye had my aim been better!" cried Sir Richard, with another burst of laughter.

"And I would surely ha' killed you had your aim been worse!" declared Sir Gregory.

"But come! Explain," said Richard, for the joke seemed to be at his expense.

"Ah, Dickon, lad, I am glad to see ye," said Gregory, wiping his eyes and cheeks as he sat up. "'Tis a lonely life at best, but a man must even live like a hermit when he has no money to follow the King's lead and keep the pace."

"But surely Warfield estate is not so profitless that——"

"Profitless!" echoed Gregory, and he was threatened with another attack of mirth. "Why, the very rats in the cellars grow thin on the living. I tell ye, Warfield is neither mine nor thine, Dickon. 'Tis the property of ten score psalm-singing, fat-headed sons of Oliver Cromwell.

"Thus your father left it, and thus my father, Sir Geoffrey, found it when 'twas restored to us by the restored King. The Commonwealth made masters of our servants and servants of their masters. They pay rent when the wind blows backward."

"Mutiny, by Harry!" exclaimed Third Grog indignantly. "Burn'em!"

"But the King hath power to change all this," said Richard, who began to think that possibly buccaneering was the more profitable business after all.

"Dickon," said Gregory, with a solemn face but a twinkling eye, "the people tolerate the King only as the King tolerates the people. Thus he is merry to-day, for to-morrow he may go to the block as his father did. 'Twill be a reign or two ere England is herself again."

Sir Gregory chuckled.

"Marry!" said he, "but for a few loyal retainers I could never ha' called myself master of another man's acres!"

"And so ye hoisted the black flag an' boarded craft upon the highway," said blunt old Grog.

Gregory's chuckle became a ripple of good-natured delight.

"Even so," said he. "Fat merchants live upon the fat of the land, and a gentleman may be forgiven if he levies tribute upon his own highroad. There is a toll upon Warfield estate, and I am the toll-taker. The King himself is toll-taker of all the

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kingdom and—" with a quick glance at Sir Richard—" 'tis rumor that of late he was toll-taker on the Main. We be all buccaneers these days. England is as rotten as the State of Denmark, and if the King is his own law we but honor his example. Why cavil, then, at honest dishonesty when 'tis but the fashion of the times?

"But come!" he broke off, rising to his feet and clapping his hands. "This is a sorry reception. Let us drink to ourselves and the reign of Merry Charles."

HE DIRECTED the lackey who appeared upon his signal to bring the best wine from the oldest bin in the darkest cellar.

"And we shall drink it from the most ancient goblets in the house of Warfield. As the governor of the feast wisely said, 'Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine.' See, Cousin Dickon, I have Scripture."

"So hath the Devil for all o' that!" laughed Richard.

"You will suffer me," said Gregory, suddenly grave, "to be host for this day. Tomorrow I must be guest. But of that anon."

The wine was brought. Gregory himself filled the goblets. Presently he raised one of them and gave a toast—

"To Sir Richard Warfield, Baronet, master of Warfield Towers!"

He drained the goblet and laid it down. Advancing, he placed his two hands upon the buccaneer's broad shoulders.

"Dickon, my cousin," said he, and there was no mistaking the sincerity in his face and tone, "welcome home to your father's house. I am a worthless fellow, but I have done one thing as I see right. I have kept your inheritance for ye, though never dreaming you lived or ever had existence. Now I yield it ye with a little envy, but no enmity.

"Cousin," he added, looking deeply into Richard's blue eyes, "tell me there is, and shall be, no ill feeling between us."

Richard, into whose life new sensations of human relationship were crowding each succeeding day, was stirred at heart.

"Cousin Gregory," said he, "I confess this reception touches me. I think, myself, the King is a sorry jester, for he warned me you were a blade and would meet me with a point of steel for a hand of welcome.

"Also," he added, "I ha' mind that one Master Gosling, a scrivener, told me you were a sorry rogue. But Gosling having forsworn himself, I drink to you, Gregory, and to our love and friendship."

Sir Gregory bowed as Sir Richard drained his goblet.

Third Grog, in the meantime, had been viewing the proceedings with mingled suspicion and astonishment. As Richard and Gregory stood face to face and shook hands with the whole-heartedness of men who have agreed upon each other's measure, the old buccaneer muttered to himself—

"Times change an' so do langwidge, but human natur' don't, or I be not seventy year old."

With which cryptic utterance, Third Grog added, "Here's to loot!" and buried his nose in his undrained goblet.

"And so," said Gregory, when the ceremonies were concluded, "and so you met the King. And what said the Merry Monarch? What did he say of me?"

Richard smiled. He wondered how Gregory would receive the King's decision in the matter of right and title to Warfield Towers and all pertaining thereto.

"He is indeed a Merry Monarch," said the buccaneer-Baronet, "and he declares 'twere better sport that you and I fight out the issue between ourselves. He would not be forsworn for either of us."

"Fight it out?" echoed Gregory, with an air of incredulity. "And does his Majesty think I would murder my own cousin?"

"Murder?" It was Richard's turn to look surprised. "If one falls in fair fight, how is it murder?"

Gregory's face took on an expression of amusement.

"Cousin Dickon," said he, "what skill have ye with the weapon at your side?"

"Less, I will admit, than I have with the cutlas. But for all that I fear no man."

A faint tinge of color was darkling on Richard's cheekbones. Gregory laughed.

"As a modest man, I dare not boast my own prowess," said he, "but I could make clear my meaning——"

" 'Tis clear enough," said Richard rising, "and I am ready when you are."

"Good!" cried Gregory without the least unfriendliness. "If that is the King's pleasure, as loyal supporters of his law let us settle the matter now."

"Avast!" roared Third Grog, jumping up

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as Gregory smilingly drew his rapier. "Happen ye would let out the wine as fast as ye let it in? Burn me, yer mouths is still wet from a drinkin' to your friendship!"

"Your ancient friend is right," said Gregory to his cousin, "but he misunderstands. I would merely show that the King sanctions murder."

"We shall even test that," said Richard, puzzled, but determined to hold the manliest ground. He unsheathed his new rapier.

THE two thin blades flashed in the air and slithered across each other with a sinister hiss. Gregory laughed as he observed that Richard was no beginner in fight and skill. He himself was quite hard pressed for a few seconds, being taken with surprise.

"Keep cool, Cousin Dickon," said he. "We but measure our skill in friendly play."

Even as he said so his wrist performed a rapid movement. Richard's blade encountered nothing and he woke to find his cousin's point right over his heart.

"Touch!" said Gregory, bowing. "Once more—and careful, Dickon."

This time Gregory did not have it all his own way. The young buccaneer, though unused to the subtleties of the rapier, was a master of cut-and-thrust fighting, as many a Diego had never lived to testify.

Also, Richard was now fencing warily, conscious of his own disadvantage. Thus for full three minutes the two cousins fought. Then Gregory seemed to pull himself together. His lips closed firmly; his dark eyes burned and his nostrils widened. For that matter, both men were breathing quickly and sharply, while Third Grog, a naked cutlas in his hand, hopped around ready to strike up their blades.

The rapiers flashed, slithered, hissed and gave off little sparks of fire. Richard was now confident and smiling, albeit becoming a little rash, as Gregory looked for.

Suddenly Gregory feinted. Again Richard's blade hissed through thin air. At the same time the young buccaneer felt a jet of pain through the inner side of his right arm, high up.

"Avast heavin'!" roared Grog.

Gregory plucked away the rapier point. A crimson stain spread upon Richard's sleeve. The young Baronet looked down at it and laughed.

"Gregory," said he, "you are a master of fence."

But Gregory paid no heed to the compliment. He threw the rapier from him as if it were an accursed thing and rushed forward to his cousin's side.

"Dickon!" he cried. "I have wounded you. Forgive me!"

Richard stared at him.

"Forgive you what?" said he. "'Twas well done!"

"Nay, 'twas ill done!" protested Gregory, his face grave with concern. "But 'fore Heaven, I could not help it. You are no child with the blade and I was hard put to defend myself. Bless Fortune, 'tis but a scratch. An inch to the right and 'twould have ploughed your ribs. Here, let me bind it up."

While Gregory, with many protestations of grief at the mishap, tied up his cousin's arm with a kerchief, Third Grog stumped restlessly about the room, pausing every now and then to scratch his head, the while he directed puzzled glances at the two cousins, who were again unanimous in kindly feeling.

"According to the King," Richard was saying, "if I should win the fight over ye, Gregory, 'twould be Mistress Laura's privilege to salve my wounds."

Gregory stopped short in the act of knotting the kerchief. He looked straight into Richard's eyes, which were not twelve inches from his own.

"Mistress Laura—who?" said he slowly.

"I must even be honest," said Richard, "for 'twas part of the King's pleasure that Mistress Laura Fernleigh should marry the winner."

Gregory bent his eyes to the task of binding the arm. There was silence. Presently he said coldly:

"And hath Mistress Laura no choice in the matter? What if she hath made her choice already?"

At the sudden downcast expression on Richard's face, Gregory gave a hearty laugh which again dispelled the cloud.

"Nay, Cousin Dickon!" he declared. "Ye must even console yourself with Molly Holly, whom I saw ye buss ere I entered the inn last night. She be a fair lass and as full of ripe blood as a plum."

"But in love I have no luck," declared the young buccaneer. "'Tis in my mind somehow that she hath given her heart

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already to one Master Gosling, a scrivener, though I see now that she knew him not by that name."

Gregory chuckled hugely.

"Alas, poor Richard!" said he. "But what of that? She is but an innkeeper's wench and fair game for all comers."

A TERRIFIC crash, accompanied by a bull-like snort, startled the cousins. Gregory turned and discovered Third Grog glaring at him, his fist clenched upon the table.

"Sir Gregory Warfield!" said the fiery old man. "Ye be speakin' o' my granddaughter once removed. Take it back, burn ye, or I'll cut out yer eternal liver and lights!"

Gregory stared, then turned with a haughty air to Richard.

"Cousin," said he, "I neglected to ask you. Who is this wight with the wooden leg?"

Richard resented the tone.

"He is Melanchthon Holly, better known as Third Grog, as good a heart as ever beat, and he hath been a father to me. Furthermore, Sir Gregory, I would have ye know that his fortunes are mine, and mine his. He is grand uncle to Holly Molly, who is as good a lass as ever lived!"

There was no indetermination about Grog's Boy's utterance, and Gregory noted it. The latter turned to Third Grog, who was a picture of outraged avuncular feeling.

"Master Holly," said Gregory with his hand over his heart, "I most humbly crave pardon."

Third Grog glared, snorted, and finally put away the cutlas. He nodded his gray head and seemed to feel a new dignity upon himself.

"Heave ahead, then," said he. "We be all gentlemen here, and 'tis seemly that we remembers it."

Gregory's mouth-corners twitched. Even Richard smiled. Then Gregory's irrepressible humor broke out again, but in order that Third Grog should not misconstrue his mirth, the deposed master of Warfield Towers cried:

"Marry, but we are a dangerous trio. Avast! as Master Holly would say. Let us drink another cup to lovely concord. As for you, lad," he added, turning to Dickon, "you are your father's son. You'll make a brave Sir Richard, I warrant, and 'tis your cousin Gregory will stand by ye to the last. Do ye play cards?"

"Bravo!" cried Sir Richard. "I do, being unlucky at love. Let us to it!"

"Good!" said Gregory. "The day's young, and to-morrow the master of Warfield will hunt the fox."

They played cards the rest of the day, pausing only for a half-hour when a great bell sounded for the noonday meal at Warfield Towers. Before dusk Gregory had won every gold piece the two buccaneers possessed. But the gentlemen of the sea were used to the turns of fortune.

The dusk deepened into balmy English Summer night. Lights beamed from every window of Warfield Towers. From the open casements facing the old gardens came sounds of revelry.

Later, the lights were extinguished one by one, to the tune of that old buccaneer chant with which Morgan's men cheered themselves on the march to Cruces and Panama:

Come fair or fow-ell weather
A-way-ay-O!
We all will hang together,
So hang, boys, hang!

CHAPTER X

CONCERNING A FOX HUNT

THROUGH the open window of his chamber in Warfield Towers, Summer air and Summer sunshine came with sounds of activity which awoke Sir Richard from sleep next morning. In the stable yard below the old Norman tower the horse boys were softly hissing as they groomed the animals for the fox hunt.

"This is better than waking up in the cages and hearing the tramp of the hanging-squad," reflected Richard, reveling in the quiet luxury of it all.

In the clear still air the voices in the stable yard came distinctly to his ears. There were, as usual, idlers among the active and they were gossiping with all the vim of a sunny morning.

"Yuss, indeed, says I!" said the first voice. " 'E be a fine upstandin' young gentleman, 'e be, but they do say as 'ow a gentleman from the sea can't never ride a 'awss. Of course, 'tis Sir Gregory as'll ride Sir Everard, so it must be Sir Richard as is to ride Lord Gaunt. Which means 'e must be

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up to the tricks of a 'awss as is a clown for downright foolish ways."

"And 'ow about Master 'Olly?" said a second voice; " 'im as is become a gent though he be nuncle to the innkeeper? Will 'e ride to the 'ounds wi' the gentlemen, I axes you? Wot's Hengland a comin' to, hey?"

"Hengland's a comin' to nothing," said the first speaker. "Hengland is a goin' to the dawgs. Whoa, Sir Everard!" and a clattering of hoofs on cobblestones came to Richard's ears along with the sibilant hiss of the groom and the cool splash of disturbed water in a bucket.

The deafening blast of a trumpet echoed and reëchoed through the confines of the great house. It was followed by a halloo from the landing outside Richard's chamber and a hammering upon the oaken door. At Richard's bidding, Gregory came in briskly. He had a silver bugle in his right hand. He was attired in white doeskin breeches, knee-boots and a red coat.

"Awake, ye sluggard pirate!" he shouted. "There's a fox in earth by the Black Pool in the Bracken Wood. 'Tis the master of Warfield that must bring home his brush. Up, lad, up!"

And putting the silver bugle to his lips, Gregory blew a blast that shattered the last of Richard's dreams. The echoes of the bugle had hardly died away before a horn was wound in the distance.

"They come already. I know that short note. 'Tis fat Bagley, as ha' slack cheeks and no wind."

Richard caught the spirit of the occasion at once and leaped from his bed. Gregory had procured him a suit of hunt-clothes. The cousins were of a general size, but Richard had the greater breadth of shoulder. The red coat split in the back when he tried to put it on.

"For that matter," said he, " 'tis all too tight. If I must ride a horse for the first time, I would be easy."

To the delight of Gregory, his buccaneer-cousin tore off the offending garments. Fifteen minutes later, when he appeared before Bagley and a half-dozen other red-coated huntsmen, Richard was dressed in the handy costume which had interested the audience at the trial of Harry Morgan. He wore the Spanish doublet, the cowskin breeches, the sea boots and the crimson sash. It might not be quite correct, but it was, as it was designed to be, a handy costume for any occasion requiring hard work.

AFTER the usual ceremonies attending the hunt-gathering, the merry men drank a stirrup-cup. Richard had swung himself into the saddle and was receiving instructions from Third Grog.

"Burn me, Boy!" said the old buccaneer. "Y'are aboard a ticklish craft. Keep yer fore an' aft canvas reefed an' careful o' the boom when ye wear ship. An' if she don't answer the hellum, get the wind abaft the beam an' let her rip."

"Aye, aye, matey!" said Richard.

"As for me," added Third Grog, "I'll on the reach for the Apple and Flagon an' spend the day in the bosom of my fambly. No cruisin' o' this sort for me. Give me a soft wave to ride on wi' a willin' craft, an' none o' yer flapperty-jacks pilin' over reefs an' sandpits."

The horns blared; away went the huntsmen. The cavalcade disappeared around a bend of a wood-road with Richard Warfield, buccaneer, clinging to a horse's neck and trying to regain his suddenly disturbed seat.

Once he got back into the saddle he found it easier to adapt himself to the motion of the horse. When his animal, following the others' lead, broke into a canter, he actually enjoyed the motion, which was not unlike that of a rocking chair.

They reached the Bracken Wood, which was a few hundred yards to the Warfield side of a stream flowing into and out of the pool known as the Black Pool. The dogs were already in the wood, silently rooting for Master Reynard.

"Now, Cousin Dickon," said Gregory, riding like a centaur to the inexperienced one's side, "when the cry is raised, hold fast to your seat and leave it to Lord Gaunt. Grip the saddle with your knees and be not caught napping by a sudden swerve."

"Even as Third Grog says, as never straddled a horse in his life!" laughed Richard. " 'Mind the boom when ye wear ship!' "

Even at that moment the dogs gave tongue and broke cover—a strung-out river of long-limbed, wiry-haired harriers,* winding away on the scent of the fox which had slipped from its earth and was streaking away down the west wind.

*The foxhound of to-day—a splendid mongrel—was not evolved then.

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The horns blared; the huntsmen yelled, and the horses leaped to the gladsome sounds. This time Richard was not caught napping. He kept his seat and allowed Lord Gaunt to go his own way, which was in the wake of the other animals.

"Yoi-yoi-yoi-yoi!" yelled Gregory, and the cry was taken up by every throat.

Sir Dickon, his blood suddenly stirred by the sporting instincts of his ancestors, gave vent to his feelings in the battle cry of the buccaneers, the long-drawn, heady

"Ou-*e-e-e-e-e-e!*"

He swung his bonnet from his head and brought it down with a slap upon Lord Gaunt's neck. The big-boned, scraggy horse gave a snort of disgust and indignation and took the bit in his teeth. In three seconds Richard shot past Gregory, who gave him a yell of encouragement; shot by fat Bagley, who snorted at him; and presently there was nothing ahead but the dogs and the fox.

The land lifted gently to a hillock. At the top of it the harriers swerved and disappeared. But Richard kept straight on. He reached the height of the rising and then——

IT WAS too late to wear ship. The rising shelved precipitately downward. Lord Gaunt snorted and slid down the declivity on his haunches. Richard saw in a flash what was at the bottom, —hardly any sooner, however, than he encountered it.

There was a terrific splash as horse and rider plunged headlong into the Black Pool!

But better plain water than hard ground, thought Richard, as he disengaged himself from the stirrups and struck out, swimming. With strong strokes, and laughing as he shook the water from his eyes, he made the opposite bank.

He was conscious of a great cheering near him. The other huntsmen, knowing the lay of the land, had tried to warn him, but, in the excitement of the chase, Richard had been deaf.

Lord Gaunt could swim, of course, and scrambled, dripping, up the bank behind him. Richard seized the bridle, led the animal up the farther slope, and climbed into the wet saddle as if nothing had happened.

"Bravo, cousin!" cried Gregory, who had crossed the stream by a bridge below the pool. "You'll make a brave hunter, but you had best curb your daring and ride with me."

The fox, in the meantime, had traveled upstream and momentarily the harriers were at fault. But presently the dogs gave tongue again, and merrily the hunt was resumed. And loud and long above the cries of the other huntsmen arose the carrying call of the buccaneer—

"Ou-*e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e!*"

"Marry!" cried Gregory, riding but half a neck behind Sir Richard, "ye set a furious pace, lad."

Then he swayed in his saddle, laughing at the brave lack of practised grace that characterized the buccaneer's riding. Richard "cut capoose" in the most windmill-like manner, his arms crooked outward, his shoulders hunched and bent forward, his legs spraddled wildly, and daylight shining between his seat and the saddle at every leap of the big-boned Lord Gaunt.

"Lord! You'll be as stiff as a corpse tomorrow!" cackled Gregory. "You'll groan to be alive!"

Still Richard thundered recklessly ahead. The pace was fast. Warfield was left behind and with it four or five of the hunters. Fat Bagley was still third in the race and determined, like the stolid Briton he was, to be in at the death, at least.

They were now in Fernleigh lands. Away ahead, through a break in the trees that dotted field and rising, appeared Elizabethan gables and sparkling windows. Fernleigh Hall was in sight. The cheery winding of the horns had brought two ladies out upon the smooth lawn before the house.

Richard's heart gave a leap, for in one his heart recognized the lady of Whitehall, although he had no reason to think that she was not still in London Town.

His hand involuntarily tightened on the left rein. Lord Gaunt's head turned toward Fernleigh Hall.

"At it, you plucky devil!" cried Gregory, swerving also.

A wide ditch appeared directly ahead. Immediately beyond it was a little grove of heavy timber. Richard had not noticed the ditch until Gregory spoke.

"At it!" cried Gregory again. "I dare you!"

That was enough for Richard. Gregory was behind him, so the buccaneer did not gain any visible example from his tactics.

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He himself struck the horse's neck with the insulting bonnet and gave a wild yell as he galloped at the ditch.

But the horse seemed to feel that here some skill must be evident in the rider before he would take that ditch. Richard, inexperienced, left it all to Lord Gaunt. His equine lordship came to within four yards of the ditch. Then, with a snort of protest, he refused it, and came up short upon his haunches.

Just what followed, Richard could never afterward recall. It all happened too quickly. He was conscious of a sudden lift into the air, a whirling vision of turf, ditch, trees and blue sky.

Then he felt as if a mountain had collided with a cannon ball. He experienced a terrible shaft of pain through his left shoulder, followed by a loud explosion in which the whole world went up in smoke and red fire. Then the ruins of the universe became black—black as the pit into which he fell several million miles before he lost consciousness.

Gregory, who had drawn up his horse upon the safe side of the ditch in order to watch his cousin's feat, gave a gasp. Then he sat still, his eyes fixed upon the prostrate figure at the foot of the tree against which Richard had struck.

He sat there for fully a minute, and stirred only when there came a clatter of hoofs behind. Gregory dismounted and scrambled across the ditch to his cousin's side, just as a huntsman came thundering up. It was fat Bagley.

"Good Heaven, Gregory! What's happened?" cried Bagley.

Gregory, who had swiftly examined the inert figure, straightened up with a strange, unholy gleam in his eyes. He glared at Bagley, who sympathized with his mood; then turned his blazing eyes upon the horse. Lord Gaunt was standing near, the bridle trailing around his knees.

Without a word, Gregory whipped a pistol from his waist, leveled it at the horse and fired.

"There!" he hissed, as the animal gave a start and slowly collapsed with a ball in its brain. "Ye'll never play that trick again!"

WHEN Sir Richard Warfield began to come back to the world above the pit, his first intimation of it was that there was light dawning above him. Out of the red mist emerged a face—a quiet, tender face, with great brooding eyes, soft black hair and rich red lips slightly parted in expectancy and hope.

The heart of the man stirred to quicker action under the gaze of those eyes. He drew a long breath and tried to raise himself nearer to them. The face vanished. There came sounds of whispering and a rustling of skirts. A door closed quietly in the far distance.

Richard opened his eyes to find his cousin Gregory bending over him.

"Dickon, boy!" said Gregory, and there were tears in his eyes. " 'Twas my fault and that brute's. But he'll never take a saddle again. Say you forgive me, Dickon! Say you forgive me."

"Of course," said the buccaneer faintly. "But——" He attempted to lift his head and look around him. He was in bed in a great sunny room.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"At Fernleigh Hall, lad. Your shoulder is broken. Thank your luck it is no more!"

Richard lay back. He was in Fernleigh Hall, toward which his heart had prompted that touch on the bridle. And it was real what he had seen. It had been the face of Mistress Laura Fernleigh that bent over him.

He smiled.

"Who got the—the brush?" he asked, and fainted.

CHAPTER XI

IN THE TIME OF ROSES

SEVERAL days passed before Richard was able to receive ladies, although he would have been ready to swear himself fit five minutes after he recovered his senses.

His eyes, therefore, were fixed expectantly upon the door when it opened to admit an elderly lady, whom he at once recognized as the sweet-faced dame to whom Mistress Laura had whispered at the court of Whitehall. It was Lady Fernleigh, Laura's mother.

He was conscious of another figure behind her, but for sake of his own equanimity he kept his eyes upon Lady Fernleigh as she advanced toward the couch.

"Sir Richard Warfield," said the mother, her voice as pleasant and maternal as her countenance, "I am your neighbor. I hope you are better. This is my daughter, Mistress Laura Fernleigh."

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Then Richard lifted his eyes and looked. It might have been wholly imagination, or it might have been a result of the fact that the sunshine from the windows was playing behind her, but Richard Warfield could have sworn that he was looking at a radiant angel.

The light glanced through her soft, black hair and touched her small ears with a faint, luminous pink. Her face, turned from the sunshine, was delicately shaded, as it might have appeared under a wide hat or in the half light of the woods. A glad smile touched her lips and eyes with an appealing warmth.

"And so, Sir Richard," Laura said, "you escape all the perils of the high seas and the Main to be nigh killed at Fernleigh's door?"

"Mistress Laura," said Richard, swallowing hard, "it was necessary that I escape such perils to reach Fernleigh at all, and that I was not killed at Fernleigh's door was in order that I might cross the threshold and meet you—and your dear mother." He nearly forgot to add the last.

The old dame's eyes twinkled.

"Come, Laura," said she with mock alarm. "This is a dangerous man, as we reckoned men in my day. But hark ye, Richard," she added, lifting an approving finger, "you have taken our favorite room, but now you are getting well we will come for a time each day, I to do my embroidery and Laura to practise her singing to the spinet."

"Mistress Laura," said Richard, quickly, "there is never a time like the present, and I swear I have never heard a—a lady sing."

But Mistress Laura blushingly declared that the honor of being first was too great for a poor performance. Mistress Fernleigh pretended great surprise at such modesty, and said:

"If I were much older than I am, my woman's vanity could never miss so sweet a chance. Sir Richard, I will even sing for you myself!"

And with a playfully arch look at Richard, the dear lady went to the spinet by the window and, accompanying herself with old fashioned grace, sang:

> It was a lover and his lass,
> With a hey and a ho and a hey nonino!

When she had finished declaring that "sweet lovers love the Spring," she came swiftly to Richard's side and ran her motherly hands over pillows that seemed to respond magically to her touch. Then she left the room, taking Laura with her.

WHEN they came on the following day they were accompanied by Sir Gregory. This time Mistress Laura was less bashful. With Gregory she seemed perfectly at ease and, through him, with Sir Richard. In the days that followed it always puzzled Richard to note that she was peculiarly shy with himself, except when Gregory was present, when she divided her favors, although unevenly, Richard thought.

On this particular day Richard felt the first ache of loving. Lying there in bed he felt all a strong man's contempt for his weak condition. He mentally compared himself, even at his best, with the polished Sir Gregory, who was never amiss in word or act. Gregory knew how to kiss a fair lady's hand with a nonchalance that had just the proper degree of gallantry in it. And his manner toward each of the two ladies was a correct definition of the chivalrous deference due the mother and the romantic worship due the younger lady.

Then there was the fluent offhandedness with which Sir Gregory could discuss even the most trivial matter that drifted into the conversation, be it court gossip, or dress, or a book of verse, or a new play. And Grog's Boy, buccaneer—for he forgot a while that he was Sir Richard, Baronet—could hardly read or write!

"After all," he thought bitterly, his eyes noting the rapt attention which Mistress Laura accorded his cousin, "I am but a cutlas-swinging pirate. What do I here?"

But he did his best to bring no shame upon Gregory for his pirate cousin. When the chance offered he begged Laura to sing the deferred song, now that Lady Fernleigh had broken the ice.

"Do, Mistress Nightingale!" Gregory supplemented. "And birds shall fall silent, thinking it is moonlight."

Mistress Laura curtsied mockingly. She went to the spinet, struck a single note, and sang:

> Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
> Old Time is still a flying·
> And this same flower that smiles to-day,
> To-morrow may be dying.

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Presently the ladies left Gregory alone with his cousin, whereupon Richard demanded an accounting of matters at Warfield Towers. Gregory, who was gazing after the vanished Mistress Laura, turned slowly.

"Ah, Dickon!" he sighed. "Would that I had broken my collarbone!

"But Warfield Towers!" he went on, brightly. "Why ask me? I am no longer master there!"

He chuckled hugely.

"Master Pirate is steward in your absence and is so jealous of your prerogatives, cousin, that I fear to order a horse saddled for a morning ride."

His face was momentarily serious.

"I sometimes fancy he does not like me, this wooden-legged shadow of yours; but—" with a shrug and a quick laugh—"he is a merry old dog and keeps me in humor. Ha! I tell ye, Dickon, not only hath he possessed himself of Warfield Towers in your name, but in his own he is now landlord of the Apple and Flagon. And what think ye? He hath taken Molly and made her chambermaid at the Towers. Marry, he would ha' John Holly major domo and Maria housekeeper, but that the Apple and Flagon does not run itself!"

Gregory related all this with such mirth that Richard thought he was jesting.

AFTER his cousin went away, Richard fell into an uneasy, depressed state of mind. He longed to be well and able to go away from Fernleigh. He was now certain that Gregory loved Laura and that Laura returned his affection.

One thing comforted him. It was borne in upon him somehow that Mistress Laura's mother had conceived a real affection for him. It had not escaped him that her sense of humor, her spirit and common sense, reveled in the stories which he told during the embroidery and singing hour—tales of fighting and frolic down by the Spanish Main.

He would have appreciated her spirit more had he known that her late husband, Laura's father, was himself a daredevil. Sir Ralph Fernleigh had been a supporter of the King and hail fellow with him as a Prince. They had plotted together against Cromwell and fled together from the Protector's wrath. They had starved together, and the successful hiding of the King at Warfield Towers had been due in large part to Fernleigh's cunning. The Roundheads never dreamed that Sir Ralph and the King could be so near Fernleigh Hall, yet not in it. Lastly, Fernleigh had died for his Prince.

Richard told his stories with discretion, but he noted how the old dame's eyes glowed as he described the adventures of the raid upon the Rio Hacha, and he also noted how Laura's face was illumined and shadowed by a complexity of emotions when, in a sentimental moment, he told of the escape from the hangman's cages at Port Royal.

That was the time—one of the rare times—when hope stirred in Richard's heart, for when he told how the half-breed girl Chiquita had sacrificed herself and died that he might be free, Mistress Laura listened, now with brimming eyes, again with eyes that were drooped in maidenly disapproval, sometimes with an amused smile and again with a little knitting of her brows, accompanied by a faint flush of her cheek.

"She must have loved you deeply," Laura said, after a long pause. Lady Fernleigh was unashamedly wiping the tears from her eyes.

"Who knows a woman's heart?" answered Richard, softly. "Least of all does he who loves, or is beloved."

So the days passed, but, far from making any inroad upon Mistress Laura's heart, it seemed to Richard that, by comparison with himself, Gregory crept closer to her affection.

But an incident happened that cheered him greatly. One morning there came a tapping at his door. At his word, it slowly opened and a face, rosy, timid and smiling, appeared. It was Mistress Laura.

"I have brought you something," she said.

"Then give me," said he, extending his able arm.

She made a little *moue* of reproof, but glanced, nevertheless, over her shoulder into the hall. Then she cast convention to the air upon impulse, swung the door wide open, came rapidly on tiptoe across the room and laid upon his pillow a great mass of dew-wet wild roses.

He looked up at her hungrily. Her face was tinted with the glow of blood stirred by morning air. Her hair had come slightly undone, and he noticed that her dress was stained with dew, and that little burrs clung to it. She had plucked the roses in

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the morning woods—and with a thought of him.

"For the roses' sake I must even worship the thorn," said the lovesick buccaneer.

She lowered her eyes. At that instant there sounded a great uproar in the hall below. Laura looked up in alarm. Richard began to laugh as a stentorian voice arose through the house:

"Burn ye! If ye don't lead me to the cabin aft, I'll skewer ye like a flank o' beef. Avast, ye inshore jellyfish! Where's Sir Richard Warfield, Barrinet? Lead me to him!"

"Let him advance, Mistress Laura!" pleaded Richard. "Let him come on, or he will scuttle the ship and swing the household on the yards."

Even then they could hear the stump-and-stamp gait of the old buccaneer advancing up the stairs. He was blowing like a whale and grumbling like an aggrieved mule, as he made his progress under menial protest.

But the moment he caught sight of Mistress Laura, Richard could hear his manner undergo a change. The stump-and-stamp ceased, as did the blowing and snorting. There was silence.

"Sir Richard bids you enter," said Mistress Laura, "and right welcome."

"Axin' pard'n, beautiful lady," said Third Grog's voice, "but burn my boots if I didn't think ye a siren, which is a sea-spook."

He appeared in the doorway and gave a hail like a bull's bellow at sight of Grog's Boy in the bed.

"So there ye be, as ever was! Amain! Ou-*e-e-e-e-e!* Are ye whole, or has some swab of a sawbones been at ye?"

Richard assured the old buccaneer that he was well. Laura quietly closed the door, leaving the two together. Straightway Third Grog, having satisfied himself that no sawbones had looted his protégé of anything, entered upon his own affairs, which he declared were Richard's, it having been agreed that their fortunes and misfortunes were each other's.

FIVE minutes later Richard was shouting with laughter, for Gregory had spoken in no jest. Grog had taken possession of the inn and the Towers. He had installed Holly Molly as maid of the chambers—"an' prettier than ever she be in her white cap an' apron"—Maria had had the milking added to her over-many duties, and Holly, as was too fat to be respectable, had now to attend the public bar in place of Molly.

"No granddaughter o' mine, even once removed, is a going to sarve rum an' be tickled under the chin by Tom, Dick and the other swab!" he cried. "An' I made a noo roole," he added. "The sign's been changed to the Three Jorums an' no man is sarved more'n three grogs at a single sittin'."

"One's for the wit. Two's for the heart——"

And here the door opened and Mistress Laura rushed in, concern depicted on every feature of her beautiful face. With a broken shoulder, she explained to Third Grog, Sir Richard must not laugh like that!

"Burn me, beautiful lady, but that's so," said Grog, rising and bobbing and scraping. "Swing me at the yard, beautiful lady! Run me out on the plank for a lubber!"

"Y-you'd better go, Grog!" gasped Richard.

Third Grog, still condemning himself and still bowing and scraping before this beautiful lady who exercised magic control over him, allowed himself to be led forth like a lamb.

Richard, in an agony of mirth, could hear him protesting and axin' pardon as he negotiated step by step the stairs with his mahogany leg.

"Beautiful lady, I ought to be keelhau——"

Then there came a terrific crash and a scream from Mistress Laura, followed by a succession of snorts and loud bumps and a final crash from the bottom of the flight of wooden stairs.

One minute later Laura came rushing back into Richard's room, her face flushed and her hair in disarray.

"He is not hurt!" she cried assuringly.

Then she saw that Richard was shaken with a mingling of pain and laughter. Her face became as maternally grave as her mother's could be at times.

"Oh, you must not! You must not!" she cried earnestly, laying a firm hand upon his strong shoulder, a gentle one upon his weak side, and pressing him back upon the pillows.

Instantly his laughter ceased. At her touch his face became marvelously gentle

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and he yielded to her entreaty. But he drew one of her hands to his lips; then, looking up, he said quietly:

"You are right. I must not."

"Child!" said a voice from the doorway.

They both looked, and there stood Lady Fernleigh, her lips set sternly in reproof.

But Richard swore to himself that there was a twinkle in the dear old lady's eyes.

CHAPTER XII

REËNTER THE HIGHWAYMAN

IN DUE course Richard was so far recovered from his fall that he was able to return to Warfield Towers in the Fernleigh ladies' carriage.

Saying farewell to Fernleigh Hall after weeks of quiet under its hospitable roof was a trying ordeal, for Richard had learned to love and revere Lady Fernleigh as he might have loved and revered his own mother. Also, his passion for Mistress Laura had grown until the unshared burden of it was exquisite pain.

"Richard," said Lady Fernleigh, "I have conceived a deep affection for you. You are your father's son, and there was a time when I thought I loved Dickon Warfield. Never pass by the doors of Fernleigh."

"If I did 'twould be in sorrow," said Richard gravely.

Perhaps he anticipated some such sorrowful passing by, for at that moment Mistress Laura was engaged in a conversation—somewhat feverish—with Sir Gregory, who had come to escort his cousin home. Never once did her eyes roam to Richard, except when the word was given and the horses started. Then, like one who feels conscious of rudeness when it is too late to recall it, Laura swept toward Richard a little pleading, startled glance.

Richard gravely bowed to her and waved his bonnet in farewell to Lady Fernleigh.

In silence the two cousins rode for about a mile. Then Sir Gregory broached the subject that was in their minds.

"Richard," said he, "if I know anything of woman's ways, Mistress Laura Fernleigh loves you."

Gregory was watching his cousin closely as he spoke, but Richard, looking straight ahead, was unconscious of it.

"She loves, indeed," said Richard, "but any save a blind man might see where her heart lies. 'Tis you, cousin Gregory."

Gregory's eyes glowed with pleasure and triumph.

"Who knows what is in her heart?" said he, softly. "I would it were true that she loved me. The world would be good then. But, ah, Dickon! I fear my happiness would be your misery."

Again his eyes fell keenly upon Richard.

"Come," said he, "let us be frank with each other. Ye love her, Dickon?"

"Aye, poor fool that I am—I love her!" said Richard, almost fiercely. "But though the odds be against me, I have learned to be a hard fighter and a good loser."

"I shall study to learn that too, Dickon, for I, also, love her and will seek to win her against you. There is my hand, cousin. May the best man win."

"May the best man win and the second best dance at the wedding feast," said Richard, shaking Gregory's hand cordially.

"But we must start even," said Gregory presently, "none having advantage of the other. Have you told her of your love?"

"No," said Richard shortly. "How could that be when I lived in her presence only by Lady Fernleigh's kindness? I could not in fairness, cousin."

Gregory glanced curiously at him and laughed.

"Where got ye such ideas of honor and fitness, cousin? Not among thieves and pirates, I'll wager!"

"There is honor among buccaneers," said Richard, with a slight edge on his tongue, "although maybe not concerning women, of whose virtues how should they know but less than nothing?

"But there are things I need not learn, cousin Gregory," he added after a little, "for they were born of my father and mother, even as the beat of my heart. Lying there upon a sick bed, Gregory, I thought much of you and me—and Mistress Laura; and I took comfort for my rough condition in this, that there is not so much for me to learn as there is to unlearn."

"True," said Gregory. "But to return to the gentle subject. If Mistress Laura would have none of you, what then?"

Richard's face fell.

"If that happened," he said slowly, "I would go back to the sea, where I belong, as a buccaneer."

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THE conversation ended there. Gregory lay back in the carriage and communed with himself, while he absently hummed:

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Time is still a flying.

It was only as the carriage turned in at the gates of Warfield that Gregory stirred himself. He started up with a laugh and cried:

"I ha' been thinking, Dickon, ye had best put to sea at once, for I *must* win where ye offer to leave country, lady, title and estates if ye are the loser!"

And even Richard had to laugh at the genial bluntness of Gregory's speech.

The joyful exclamations and shrill cries of the old lodgekeeper by the gate were but an augury of the reception which awaited Richard at the Towers. On the morning of his arrival Richard had seen nothing of his people and, of course, the hunt with its tragic ending had followed next day.

Since then Third Grog had made many friends and he had blown Sir Richard Warfield's trumpet lustily upon finding that Sir Gregory was not extremely popular among the tenants. The tenants were for the most part old Cromwellians who had settled upon the land during the years of the Commonwealth, for old Sir Richard Warfield's men had followed him to a man to the loyalist field and there left their stout bones.

These psalm-singers, surly and independent though they might be, had one weakness. They loved a stalwart man and a good fighter. And Third Grog, carefully avoiding profanity, had instilled the strong virtues of young Sir Richard into their slow-moving minds.

As a result, half in curiosity and half to do him honor, the tenants of Warfield estate lined the drive on this day and gave Richard a hearty welcome as he drove up to the Towers. Richard was astonished and pleased. Happening to turn to Gregory, he was surprised to note upon his cousin's face an expression which was unlike his genial nature. But, as Richard reflected, Gregory was but human and in all this matter of resigning the inheritance he believed to be his own, Gregory had shown a spirit which was, in generosity, almost superhuman.

Richard, sympathizing, turned away and did not look again.

THEY came to the Towers. Upon the flight of stone stairs were assembled all the house servants and stable boys, together with the woodsmen and gamekeepers. At the head of them all, as if they were an army and he its Captain, was a grizzled old fellow with a mahogany leg and a drawn cutlas. Behind him was a neat lass in white cap and apron.

Richard laughed as he was assisted from the carriage and slowly led up the flight of stone stairs. His eyes were fixed upon Holly Molly, whom he had not seen since that morning when she milked the cow and told Master Seabird he was a fool. He was anxious to note her expression when she met him as Sir Richard Warfield, Baronet.

But to his surprise her eyes were not upon him, but wistfully fixed upon his companion, Gregory. When she at length became conscious of Richard's presence, she blushed deeply, for she knew that he had read her secret in that moment.

"So 'twas Master Gosling after all," said Richard to himself, adding almost involuntarily, "Poor lass!"

Richard did not attach any blame to Gregory for being the object of Holly Molly's passion, but he could not help observing in the next few days the attitude of each to the other.

Gregory was indifferent to her, or it might be more accurate to say that he regarded her as a master does some pet that he fondles when he is in good humor. Molly, on the other hand, and as the pet, followed him with her eyes whenever he was within range of her wistful sight. She worshiped the very clothes he wore.

This much was clear to Richard. Nothing seemed clear, or even apparent, to Third Grog, who probably still labored under the delusion that there was a growing attachment between Holly Molly and the Boy. That would account to the old buccaneer's mind for any symptoms of sleeplessness or day dreaming on the part of his handsome grandniece.

Richard merely observed, but he said nothing either to Molly, her uncle, or Sir Gregory Warfield.

It was necessary that Sir Richard keep himself quiet for a little time yet, in order that his shoulder might regain its strength. For this reason the ensuing days were pleasantly spent in and around Warfield Towers, exploring the ancient house and the

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estate, making friends among the tenants, studying the old books in his father's library, and in the evenings playing cards with Sir Gregory and Grog.

Several times they visited Fernleigh and twice Lady Fernleigh and Mistress Laura came to the Towers. Then would be enacted a comedy in the old rose gardens of Warfield—a comedy which there was none to appreciate but Lady Fernleigh, for Richard felt only the ache of it.

It was a constant friendly battle between Gregory and Richard for possession of Mistress Laura and for the honor of showing her over the gardens, which, by the way, were more familiar to her than to either of them, especially Richard. Sometimes Richard saw and seized his opportunity, but for the most part and despite Lady Fernleigh's efforts on his behalf, Richard had to yield to the adroit maneuvers of the clever Gregory, although he yielded more often to the fear of Laura's displeasure. To Richard, Laura's "nay" was "nay"; to Gregory it was but an added cause for arguing it "yea."

And Lady Fernleigh, knowing his innocence of woman's whims and the sensitiveness born of his disadvantages, loved the lad the more and consoled him with the comforting sense of her allyship.

TWO little incidents occurred about this time which Richard's mind was to recall with significance later on. One afternoon when he was seated upon an old stone bench with Lady Fernleigh, with one ear for her motherly talk and two eyes for the pair that moved among the roses, Richard saw a face peering from a line of willows that cut off the gardens from the servants' quarters.

It was a face distorted with passion, jealousy and grief. The eyes of it hungrily followed every movement of Gregory and Mistress Laura, and when Laura laughingly plucked a rose and stuck it in Gregory's bonnet, it seemed to Richard that the little throb of pain in his own heart was echoed by the ghost of a sob from the willows.

Then the face vanished; but Richard had recognized Holly Molly.

The other incident was trivial, or seemed so at the time. Among the other country gentlemen who came to the Towers to pay their respects to the new Sir Richard was fat Bagley, who had last seen him stretched unconscious at the foot of the tree by the Fernleigh ditch.

"Gad's life!" said Bagley, red-faced and vehement. "What was Gregory thinking of? If he knew ye had never straddled a horse, he must ha' known ye would never ha' cleared that ditch and were riding for a fall!"

Sir Richard, acting upon one of those instincts which his blood never had to acquire, turned swiftly upon Bagley.

"Sir!" said he. "I doubt not ye mean kindly, but ye choose dangerous words. If my cousin had known I was riding to a fall, my cousin had stopped me!"

Bagley's face glowed like a wet sun in a red mist. He stared at Richard, scarce comprehending this blunt turn where he was used to the polished saving of little situations. Then he blurted out frankly:

"God bless me, Sir Richard, and y'are right! So one's tongue wags. I might turn and twist a hundred ways and my words could ha' no other meaning. Yet I meant not that in my mind. The English language is like a double-jointed nag.

"I pray you forgive and forget," said he, as Richard began to laugh. "Thy cousin, Gregory, is a spark, but a brave, loyal fellow. And, Sir Richard, that I may even square the debt, he loves you as himself, which is practical Christianity. In his anger he sent a bullet through Lord Gaunt's head right there while ye lay unconscious!"

Richard stared. It was the first he had heard of Gregory's rage, for he had not understood that allusion of his cousin's in the moment of coming out of the pit.

"He shot the horse?" said he, staring at Bagley. "Why? If Gregory himself were not to blame, why visit punishment upon a brainless beast?"

Bagley slapped his thigh and burst out laughing.

"Now!" he cried. "Now ye malign your cousin yourself!"

At that Richard's sense of humor seized him. He, too, laughed and said:

"Ah, well, good squire, 'tis as ye say. The English tongue is a double-jointed nag, forever jolting on its own hind legs."

Richard was of a mind to ask Gregory about the shooting of Lord Gaunt, but on second thought he dismissed the subject as possibly too delicate to be referred to again.

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AND that night something occurred which drove the matter from his mind. He and Gregory were playing cards in the library where they first met. Third Grog had gone off earlier in the evening to escort Holly Molly to the bosom of their mutual "fambly."

The cousins were still playing when, about midnight, Third Grog came stumping into the library in a great rage. He came straight to the table and brought his fist down upon it with a bang, while his eyes glared at Sir Gregory.

"Lookee here!" said he, stormily. "This here has got to be stopped. It may be sport and profit for you, Sir Gregory, but burn my liver and lights if 'tis for me an' my neffy an' the Sign of the Three Jorums!"

Richard stared at Third Grog, then at Sir Gregory, who had risen to his feet in a towering, white rage.

"Sirrah!" cried Gregory. "Explain!"

"I'll explain, if ye think 'tis no waste o' time!" retorted the old buccaneer, stabbing the floor with his wooden peg. "I suppose 'tis news to ye that a sartain toast-drinkin' highwayman held up the coach an hour agone atween the Three Jorums and Fernleigh Inn—*hey?*"

" 'Vast heavin', Grog!" roared Richard, starting up in astonishment and dismay. "Y'are wrong! Sir Gregory ha' been at his moorin's alongside o' me all this blessed night!"

Third Grog's jaw dropped. They both looked at Sir Gregory. That gentleman, naturally enough perhaps, was terribly put out. The obvious solution that there must be a second highwayman seemed not to occur to him at first. In fact, he blurted out with a half-hearted laugh:

"There! 'Twas my jest, Sir Dickon. And I would no longer have ye think me a common highway thief. There is but one. This is he, I take it. I but played the game once as a jest upon you."

"Then—ye knew of my coming?" said Richard after an astonished pause, for he remembered that Gregory had denied it before.

"I did," said Gregory, becoming calmer. "I, too, have friends in London Town."

"Suppose I had killed ye with that lucky shot?"

" 'Twould have been the due reward of a sorry play," was the reply, with a shrug.

"An' suppose ye had sunk Sir Dickon?" Third Grog shrewdly put in.

"Sirrah!" snapped Gregory, eyeing the old buccaneer angrily, "ye ha' tried my patience a long time!"

"Ah, well," said Grog, as if lightly dismissing the matter, " 'twould ha' been blamed on that buccaneer o' the high road if ye had, and they would ha' swung him sky high at the crossroads, and here's to loot, says you—hey?"

Gregory's hand leaped to his rapier hilt, even as Third Grog's gnarled old fist closed over his cutlas handle.

"Hold!" cried Richard, amazed and puzzled. "Grog, take shame on ye! Put up your blade, ye bloodthirsty old cutthroat. Remember respect to my cousin.

"As for you, Gregory," he added, "ye brought this upon yourself. I am glad ye are no road thief, yet I am one with ye in saying 'twas a sorry jest. I, who ha' learned to love ye, might ha' shot ye dead with never a thought but 'twas a cutpurse I killed."

The anger slowly melted out of Gregory's face. He smiled, then laughed. Finally he sheathed his blade and even directed a twinkling glance at Third Grog, who grumbled but also subsided.

"It might ha' been well, Dickon," said Gregory in his most humorous tones, "if ye *had* shot me. Think, then, how smooth the path of true love and Sir Richard Warfield would ha' run!"

CHAPTER XIII

CHARGED AND ACQUITTED

SIR RICHARD WARFIELD lost heavily to his cousin in the card game that was resumed after the highwayman discussion. He played badly, for his mind had wandered back to the morning of his arrival and Gregory's first explanation. The echoes of question and reply repeated themselves in Richard's brain.

"Did ye know 'twas your cousin ye would ha' robbed?" he had asked, and the reply of Gregory had been:

"Not I! Not till I saw ye at the inn."

Sir Gregory had lied then, or he lied now when he declared his knowledge of Richard's identity when, as the jovial highwayman, he held up the chaise that night.

During the card game, Third Grog,

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though mollified, preserved a grim silence, as if he, too, were pondering the mystery. He, too, lost money to Gregory. Neither of the buccaneers having the necessary gold in hand, they passed their word for their debts. Then the trio retired, each to his separate room.

That night Richard could not compose his mind to sleep. He was troubled. He hardly knew why, except that he had put his whole faith in Gregory and had then discovered a little flaw in the foundations of the trust. And out of the thought of that one little deception grew a host of vague, uneasy suspicions. He strove to chase them from his brain as unworthy himself or his cousin's affection.

Yet as he lay awake his mind kept traveling over every incident of his intercourse with Gregory, every act of Gregory's and every word and expression of Gregory's tongue and face. The germ of suspicion between friends, like that of jealousy between lovers, breeds "confirmations strong as Holy Writ."

THEN came Iago in the shape of Third Grog, though here Iago was truly honest in his stated convictions. Third Grog, too, had been lying awake, pondering, and had at last left his bed. He came hopping along the corridor on his one bare foot, supporting himself on the wall with his right hand, while in the other he carried a lighted dip.

Entering his young comrade's room without ceremony, he set the dip on a table and sank heavily upon the edge of Richard's couch.

"Well, Boy," said he, seeing the light gleam upon Richard's open eyes, "me and you's to have a reckonin' now."

"Well?" said Richard, who knew very well of Third Grog's dislike of Gregory and again felt strong to combat it on his cousin's behalf. "Happen 'tis as well we hold counsel."

"I warn ye against your cousin, Boy!" said the old man bluntly.

"Grog," said Richard, "ye ha' been a good friend to me ever. But for that I would challenge your words or ever they were spoke. But as I love ye, old man, say on and say all, and I shall even do my best to reason with your distemper."

"Distemper, hey?" snorted Grog. "Happen ye have a distemper in yer eyes, Boy. But ye were ever slow of wit and of too good a heart."

"Speak of my cousin. Out with it!" commanded Richard.

" 'Tis as plain to me as dark to a blind man," said Grog deliberately, "that your cousin Gregory is a rogue!"

Richard sat up in bed. He was about to protest, but checked himself and waited.

" 'Tain't in human natur'," continued Grog, his keen old eyes fixed upon Richard's face, "for a man as never saw ye to give up what he enjoyed for years, 'specially when the King favors him and even gives him the right to hold what he hath, if he can win over ye."

"Well? This is only talk," said Richard, shortly.

"He told ye truth last night, lad. He knew of yer comin'. An' he laid his plans accordin'. I tell ye, Boy—" and the old man bent forward with boring eyes—"there is not a minute since he first saw ye that he ha' not had his hand on the sword or his finger on the trigger!"

"Ye talk like a fool, Grog!" said Richard, angrily.

"Maybe," said the buccaneer coolly, "but at least I be an *old* fool. And this I ha' learned in seventy year, that human natur' ain't built like the outside o' Gregory Warfield.

"Lookee, lad. He knew ye were a comin'. He would ha' shot ye on the road if ye had not shot first, and next day he would ha' been foremost in stringing that blackamoor road thief to a elm tree.

"There bein' a real highwayman set me a thinkin', Boy. Besides, my neffy John Holly ha' told me about that one night when Sir Gregory played highwayman. But 'tis a thing mysterious to me even now, for that black horse were a took from the stable the night arter by some swab, an' we knows it were not Sir Gregory or none from the Towers, for I ha' looked well and often and there be no black animal in Warfield's stables."

"Happen he was in league with the highwayman?" asked Richard quickly. Then he could have bitten his tongue off.

"Happen he were," said Grog. "Yet the highwayman, then, were a fool to risk his neck for another man's doin's. As I tell ye, Boy, that part is a mystery. But I axes ye this: Why did Sir Gregory play yon game

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but for the purpose o' sheathin' a ball in yer heart?"

RICHARD waved his hand impatiently. Grog misunderstood the gesture and went on.

"An', furthermore, a man as plays fence an' forgets 'tis play, or makes a mistake as Gregory did, hath no more right to a sticker than a fool to a loaded pistol or a babby to pi'zon. But Gregory be neither fool nor babby, an' I seed the play with my own eyes. Once he touched ye over the heart for show, an' next he made the thrust for yer lung, an' but a chance saved yer life. That were attempt number two!"

Third Grog breathed hard and glared at Richard, as if defying contradiction.

"Is that all?" said Richard. "If so, 'tis all in your mind."

"Aye, and there's more in my mind. But hark ye from another man's mind. Happen ye ha' not learned as I ha' from stable tongues that yon ticklish craft as were called Lord Gaunt were notorious for refusin' a ditch, and your sweet cousin knowed it!"

"Others must ha' known it and my cousin would not have dared so open a thing," argued Richard.

"Aye, others knowed it—every boy as ever groomed a Warfield hoss. But what then? Gregory could ride that animal and so could any man as were a fair mount, so 'twere natural for them to think as how Gregory's cousin were fair in the saddle."

Richard was silent.

"But he knowed ye had never boarded a craft o' that four-legged rig in thy whole life. Did he warn ye? I defies ye to tell me he did. An' was it only you as saw the ditch an' crammed on all sail to cross the bar? Tell me that? Ye can not!"

Instead of being able to argue or deny, Richard again heard Gregory's laughing voice crying—

"At it, you plucky devil! I dare you!"

And at the same time he seemed to see fat Bagley's red face as he declared that Gregory must have known he was riding to a fall.

"I will not believe it," said Richard sullenly.

"And there ye be!" snorted Grog. "Ye won't believe it. Ye wouldn't believe it if Gregory rammed a sheath knife in yer throat! What's the use? says I. Ah, Boy, ye be too soft."

"'Twere better than being too hard," said Richard. "I tell ye, Grog, my cousin loves me. Hath he not shown it?"

"Aye, hath he!" jeered Grog. "'Twere his business to show it! I tell ye, ye are too ready an' too blind. Ye know but the buccaneer way, which is a clean quarrel and a quick thrust and no tackin' and wearin'. But this be not the Main, Boy, and y'ave yet to learn there be villyans o' sorts in this world.

"And who is he? *Sir* Gregory Warfield? Then you be not *Sir* Richard Warfield. One of ye be Barinet. 'Tis he, as long as ye let him fly his colors an' ye dip to them. If *y'are* Sir Richard, why, burn my belt an' boots, *be* Sir Richard an' heave this lubber by the board."

"He is my cousin!" said Richard hotly.

"Aye, an' he's yer master, ye fool babby. I grant ye he's yer cousin, but it ain't business, ye swab, to ha' two Captings to one craft. What I says is this: Send this precious Gregory adrift. Ship him to London Town if ye like, full provisioned and satisfied, but rid ye of him.

"Then marry Holly Molly and, by Harry! between the two of us we owns the Towers, the Three Jorums, the rents, the titles, the tenants, the whole craft from truck to keelson, an' we settles down like two English gentlemen to enjoy the loot! *That's* what!"

"Eh!" said Richard, startled at the proposition to marry Molly, as if it were one of the minor details requiring no argument.

THEN he saw Third Grog's buccaneer viewpoint and the old man's failure to comprehend that new straitening which had subtly crept into Grog's Boy's life—*noblesse oblige!* Despite the King's pleasure, Richard could no longer settle his difficulties with a plank, a rope, or a sudden shot.

Grog, studying the other's face, seemed to realize that he had struck a cross current. He at once bore away on another tack.

"Well," he grumbled, "happen the matter o' Molly an' you can take care of itself; hey, Boy?" with a confidential wink. "Never press young folk, says I, until they knows their own minds an' agrees thereon. But no fast an' loose, mind ye!"

Still the cross current ran.

"An' while I ain't saying what I says of Gregory is so, I warns ye, Boy. Set a double watch and sleep by yer guns.

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"There!" he concluded. "That's off my mind. Good-night, lad, an' here's to loot!"

The old buccaneer stood up on one leg, took up his dip, and hopped away to his quarters, leaving Sir Richard Warfield wide eyed in the dark.

Again he sleeplessly took up the thread of suspicion and found himself going over every point that Third Grog had raised. It was all so very circumstantial. No point but depended upon the other points for even possibility's substantiation. Even the matter of Lord Gaunt did not in itself carry weight, despite Bagley's words and the conversation of the stable boys anent the " 'awss as is a clown for tricks" which Richard had heard with his own ears on the morning of the fox hunt. It was only the chain of things that stirred the scales; and even then they took weight only from the fact that Sir Gregory had uttered that little lie about the highwayman's innocence of Richard's identity.

And against all this was the solid measure of Gregory's open personality. How could a man with a face like his, a laugh like his, a genial, frank affection like his, be capable of playing a double part?

When Richard finally slept it was upon a compromise of *noblesse oblige* and the old honesty among buccaneers. He would go to his cousin in the morning and speak what was in his mind.

It was no simple task, but one requiring moral courage more than physical. Richard did not hesitate, when the moment came.

HE WAITED for Gregory in the library. When his cousin came, it was with outstretched hand and his old ringing laugh.

"Ho, Sir Dickon! Give thee a right good-morning!"

Richard bowed but did not take the other's hand. He looked gravely into his cousin's face and said:

"Gregory, I ha' learned to love ye as my friend. But there is a poison in my mind and 'tis best I spit it out through my mouth. So we did upon the Main, and afterward men were the better friends or the better enemies."

Gregory started and his brows knitted slightly. It was easy to see he was surprised, and it was a mark in his favor with Richard.

"Speak on, Richard," said Gregory. "Y'are right. 'Twas our agreement that we nurse no ill feeling."

"Then I will be straight and quick," said Richard, bracing his shoulders.

"Gregory," said he, in a steady voice, "I ask for the truth. Was it in your mind to kill me when ye crossed our bows as highwayman?

"Was it in your mind to kill me when ye ran the rapier through my arm?

"Was it in your mind to kill me when ye mounted me on Lord Gaunt and dared me take the ditch?

"Was it ever in your mind to kill me that ye might remain master of Warfield Towers?"

Silence fell. The effect of the charges upon Gregory was startling. At the first he gave a great gasp and stared dazedly at Richard. At the second his countenance became crimson with rage and indignation. Then slowly the blood left his face, his eyes became pitiful to see, his body shook, and it was only by a master effort that he was able to command his emotions. He leaned a hand heavily upon the table. His shoulders visibly stooped and he looked at his cousin as a man might who has but heard of the death of some loved one, or of betrayal by a bosom friend.

For a moment they thus faced each other. Then Gregory's underlip trembled. He turned his back swiftly upon Richard, but not before the young buccaneer had caught the glint of rising tears in his cousin's eyes.

Gregory walked almost blindly toward the wall. Facing it blankly, he said—and Richard barely caught the words—

"Oh, Dickon, and I loved you so!"

Then he sank into a chair and covered his face with his hands.

Upon the instant, Richard, who had been undergoing agonies of changing feeling and growing remorse, was overcome with pity for his cousin, fury at Third Grog and contempt for himself.

He rushed to Gregory's side and laid gentle hands upon his bowed shoulders.

"Gregory! Gregory!" he cried. "Forgive me. Do not answer. 'Twas madness! I know now 'tis all lies. I could cut my tongue out!"

Gregory shook his head slowly without looking up.

" 'Tis too late," he said, stonily.

"Then here!" cried Richard, snatching

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from the table a pistol which he knew to be loaded, for 'twas his own. "Shoot me, or I shall even shoot myself."

GREGORY arose to his feet. His cheeks were stained by two tears, but his eyes were again dry. He took the pistol slowly from Richard's extended hand and laid it back upon the table.

"If *that* had been in my thought," said he, "I might take ye at that word."

Richard, wrought to a fine pitch by his cousin's magnanimity, grew desperate with remorse. He drew his rapier from its scabbard and cried:

"Then draw and fight, Cousin Gregory! 'Tis but fair to thee. I have insulted thee. I am a fair hand with the blade. Kill me if ye can!"

For a moment Gregory's face cleared, as if here lay the solution that would wipe out the stain on his honor, destroy the bar which Richard's words had raised between them. But almost immediately his hand fell from his sword hilt.

"Nay, Richard, if I would I may not. You have tied my hands."

Again there was stillness in the room. It was Richard who spoke next. His voice was broken as he said:

"Then there is but one course left, Gregory. I go. I return to the sea where I learned my manners. But, first, I crave this favor—try to forgive me."

"Nay," said Gregory. "'Tis I who must go. You are master of Warfield, Richard. But that we loved each other, I should have left on the very day of your coming. You are Sir Richard, Baronet; I plain Gregory Warfield. 'Tis your right. I am but a usurper upon kindly sufferance. Take what is yours, lad—your name, your lands and—the rest!"

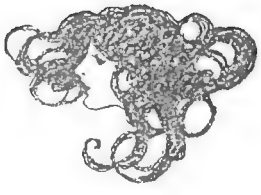
Sir Richard was very pale. He seemed about to burst into tears. Indeed, he almost did. He flung the rapier from him, rushed forward and seized Gregory around the shoulders.

"Ye shall not go. I tell ye, ye shall not! 'Tis my offense. Say, now, ye forgive me and will stay, for I shall take nothing ye do not share with me!"

Gregory looked into his cousin's eyes and smiled sadly.

"I forgive ye, lad, but—I go! There is no other way."

TO BE CONCLUDED



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FINNY AND ME AND THE MARQUIS

by LEDWARD RAWLINSON

EASTWARD over the blazing sands of Arabia, there's a dusty camel trail that leads to Mecca, the magnet of the East. Westward over the stormy Atlantic there's a mile-wide trail that leads to Manhattan, the Mecca of the West. Over the first travel only the faithful, but over the second come the unfaithful also—the scribes of other lands who burden themselves with the duty of assisting us—for a satisfactory cash consideration—to see ourselves as nobody on God's green earth ever saw us.

Prithee listen to my tale.

A YEAR ago me and Finny Dodfish arrived in the Big City bent on having a little diversion and damage. We had enough money between us to start a lawsuit against the Government, drain the Everglades of Florida, build a gambling casino on Governor's Island, or buy an estate at Pocantico Hills. We'd been down in Central America doing contract work for a few of those black and tan republics—building railroads, bridges, and wagon roads, and by a little legitimate legerdemain and brigandage, pulled off with the aid of the local *comandantes*, *corregidores*, and *presidentissimos*, we managed to cripple the treasuries of various Departments of Commerce and Labor for several Cipriano Castros to come.

After the Customs had ripped us open, turned us over, and let us loose on the United Fruit pier, we went to a haberdashery for some clothes light enough for Indian Summer and strong enough to stand the scrimmages in the subway.

"We have a lot of very fine English goods," says the clerk. "They're all the rage this year. Everybody's wearing 'em."

Finny takes me by the arm.

"Let's get out of here," says he, with a lot of anger in his face. "I wouldn't wear a suit of English clothes to be executed in."

FINNY was very bitter against John Bull, Esquire, and I'll tell you why. When we were in Guatemala we lived for three years in a camp where all the reading, educational and inspirational matter was one book published in London, and two Spanish tracts. The tracts contained pictures of pious martyrs being masticated by lions and a lot of libelous statements dedicated to the unsaved. These we read only when we were sick—very sick.

The book had the entitlement of "America through English Eyes," and before we had read two stanzas we both arrived at

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the conclusion that those eyes must have been glass. According to this particular writer we are a peach of a population of people—nervous derelicts, dyspeptics, and drunkards. We spend hundreds and thousands of dollars to save the life of a baby and then go right out and kill a trainload of people over the week-end just for a little light reading matter to go with Monday morning's breakfast.

Our manners would shame a South Sea Savage. We eat soup with a fork, drink the water in the finger-bowls, put our feet on the table after dinner, and shoot the waiter in the stomach if he refuses to take a tip. We're corrupt and immoral and full of sin, slang, ignorance and gold teeth. Our young ladies take great liberties with highballs, cocktails and fizzes, and our mosquitos bite through boots, shoes, and corrugated iron.

Our roads are rotten, our rooms are overheated, and our ice water is cold. Our millionaires are reckless, senseless dissipators of beneficence, neither companionable nor cultured. We brag, boast, wolf our food, talk in church, and bet on anything. We'd rather go to see a lynchment on Sunday morning than go to a prayer-meeting.

We'd—— But what's the use! You've read it all many times before, for the same old tale has been coming at intervals ever since my grandfather was a kid. Yet we had to read the wretched book; the rains kept us from working for weeks at a time, and we were forced to do something when we got tired of shooting iguanas and monkeys from the door of the shack.

Finny used to get so virulent that I sometimes thought he would get us mixed up in some kind of international affair. I think it was the monologue in front of the book that ruffled him most of all. In it the author apologized for writing his impressions, saying that it was a work undertaken not because of choice but because of the repeated solicitations of his friends on all sides of the Atlantic. I often used to wonder whether anybody west of Sandy Hook believed this little fable.

"BUNDY," says Finny one day, "if ever such a slanderer of a sober, steady, and solvent race of people should fall into my hands, then may the Lord have mercy on his Anglo-Saxon soul. What right has them people over there criticizing you and me? Don't we marry their bankrupt barons and pay their comedians a couple of thousand a week? A fine lot they are with their dukes and counts and earls, sitting in armchairs all day long drinking brandies and sodas, wearing gold crowns, and looking on life through rosy spectacles. As a self respecting republic we shook off that kind of shackles a long time ago and went to work, and we've been pursued by peace, prosperity and happiness ever since. I'd like to lick the whole bunch of them titled democrats ten or twelve at a time."

This isn't all he said, but it's enough to show you what his mental condition was. Now to deviate back to the tale.

After a lot of trouble we got a couple of stylish, noticeable, non-shrinkable, American-made suits over on Eighth Avenue. Then we went to get a couple of hats.

"Something in an English derby, I suppose," says the clerk.

Finny foamed at the mouth and I dragged him gesticulating out of the store. Finally we got suitably appareled from head to foot in home-made industries and registered at the swellest hotel we could find. When we ambled into the dining room that night to get something to eat in the way of dinner, the waiter handed us a bill of fare as long as a round trip ticket from Portland, Me., to San Francisco, Cal., by way of China and the Straits of Magellan.

"Never mind to-day's quotations in the produce market," says Finny. "What is there good to eat—something nice and plain and homey, like mother never used to make?"

"The English mutton chops are very fine, sir," says the waiter with a bow.

Finny went black in the face. His red hair seemed to turn scarlet.

"The dooce with the English," says he, rising to his feet and banging his fist on the table. "Give me some German beer, some German wienerwurst, German ham, a few German pancakes, a cup of German coffee, a German cigar, and ask the band to play some German ragtime. King George ain't no friend of mine."

The waiter was startled some, but he took the order, and to be sociable I made obeisance to the Kaiser by demanding the same nationality of food. But that waiter had no tact at all. Along with the ham he brought a little bottle of mustard.

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The label on it read, "Guaranteed English."

Finny expressed himself with the latitude that the case demanded.

"New York ain't America no more," says he with a quotation from the repertoire of Governor Blease. "It's a suburb of Liverpool. I expect to hear any day that they're going to continue the Brooklyn subway under the Atlantic. That'll be a big thing for Manhattan. Lots 'll go up and steerage rates 'll go down. Poor New Yorkers will be able to stroll down the Strand every week-end and busted baronets will be able to walk to Broadway."

IT TOOK me a long time to soothe Finny without resorting to violence, but I succeeded at last and we partook of wassail and wienerwurst as the opening chorus to our debauch of deutschery. It was a great meal and somehow the beer kept coming without being petitioned. We toasted the Kaiser, Bismarck, Napoleon, Adolphus Busch, Anheuser-Busch, the Daughters of the Burning Bush, Auf Wiedersehen and all the prominent Germans we could think of. Along about eight o'clock, however, we escaped and went out to get tickets for a show. We tried three different theaters, and in each case after waiting from ten to fifteen minutes in a line, the box-office ticket man said:

"This is the hit of the season—first-class London company. Seats two and a half. How many? Answer quick."

If Finny had been able to get into that man's cabin he might have made a hit, too.

Feeling sad and miserable over the joyous prospects for our vacation, we walked up Broadway. Presently we stubbed our toes on a moving-picture show where the feature of the evening was a comedy entitled, "Maria Martin, or the Murder in the Red Barn." This sounded like New Jersey or Kansas so we paid and entered.

But we didn't stay long. The very first film they flipped on the screen was "The Coronation of King George V." How, when or why Maria met her bereavement in the barn we never learned. We went home.

At the end of a week we were forced to reconcile ourselves to the fact that the password to the Big City is the word "Imported." Why, a European pickle wouldn't look at a bottle of American champagne. No sir. They daren't put the two on the same shelf for fear the pickle would spontaneously combust itself just for spite.

It was a bitter blow, but we had to make the best of it and enjoy ourselves in a serious, civilized way. By reason of a lot of injudicious expenditures in the way of money, we accumulated the friendships of a mob of promoters, gamblers, real estate men, and chorus girls, and a nodding acquaintance with a pardoned murderer. Anyhow, this highfalutin demi-tasse diversion didn't appeal to us a bit, and Finny grew silent and sullen, unsociable as a molting parrot. Before very long we both began to pine to meet people that belonged in our own walk of life and habits and to eat in places where there was more food and less frills on the bill of fare. One night, Finny grew loquacious again.

"THESE table d'hôte vaudeville eating houses is all a fake," says he. "The waiter brings you a few drops of soup or an inch of fish and while you're viewing the girl in the red dress that's cavorting up and down between the tables, shaking the bells on her fingers and singing 'Jingle, Jingle,' he snatches the plate away and says, 'What'll you have to drink now, gentlemen?'

"You don't eat at all; you only think you do. The Big City is hopelessly enmeshed in the ramifications of imported nutriment and Christian Science feeding. To be honest, Bundy, I'm hungry. I could eat a ring-boned mountain lion or a spavined llama. I want to fill the excavations of my stomach with steaks, chops, beans, country sausage, buckwheat cakes, doughnuts and a slab of apple pie big enough to throw the Twentieth Century Limited off the track. Ain't there somewhere in this town where they serve a man's meal in a man's way without any silver linings and deckle edges? Let's shake these fun-and-frolic cabarets and go out and nourish and stimulate ourselves with some grub and grocery that's more gratifying to our bestial inclinations. Another twenty-four hours of this table d'hôtery and I'll be actually pining for fried plantains and *frijoles*."

This coincided with my internal longings to sit in the presence of a substantial meal, so we turned our backs forever on the higher branches of gastronomy and walked into one of those white-tiled commissaries where eatables are sold by white-robed women in a serious, solemn, business-like

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way without any glitter or gaiety. There was a lot of people ravaging at different varieties of nourishment of the lower order, and the noise was like a steel mill on a slack day. Flying columns of waitresses were charging in every direction and shouting orders at a couple of Grecians that were collaborating in some kind of a free culinary performance in the window to draw a crowd. But nobody at the tables seemed contented. They were all restless and uneasy and kept taking their eyes off their work. Neither Finny or me could imagine what the trouble was till I noticed a sign on the wall:

WATCH YOUR HAT AND COAT

Finny pulled his hat over his ears and I buttoned up my coat. You see some awful funny things in New York.

Eventually a lady, whom we took to be the proprietor's wife, found us a couple of seats and we attacked the "Specials for To-Day," going right down from beef soup to Bulgarzoon, which is a drink and not a cheese. The female waiter, a little, wide-faced, obese girl of forty, was distant and disrespectful, for which we liked her. It was quite a change after those table d'hôte buzzards along Broadway, always looking for a chance to swoop down and do something for you, thereby making a workingman feel like a young sparrow that has to wait for mamma to put the worms in his mouth.

Finny was never so happy in his life at the change. He ate and ate like a bear in the Spring, and there was nothing refined or intelligent about my appetite either. As we started to omnivorate a couple of omelets from the made-to-order catalogue, a tall, distinguished-looking man entered the buckwheat bureau dressed in a fuzzy kind of suit that would have made a fine mat for a bathroom. In his right eye was an eyeglass, and on his head was the funniest little straw hat I ever saw, notwithstanding it was the close season on that type of headgear according to the unwritten law of Coney Island and the hat makers.

Finny looks at me and smiles.

"BUNDY," says he, "that is an aborigine from over the water. The Island of England is stamped all over him. He's out trying his hand at that popular outdoor sport called slumming. I hope he comes over here. I'll crush his skull with a butter cake and——"

But before Finny was through with his observation, Englishman comes over to our table, right into the jaws of death. After laying down his two parcels and his hat and taking off his solid kid gloves, the man sits down opposite me and begins to curl his hairy mustache. Suddenly Maggie Murphy, the waitress, stampedes into view.

"What'llyerhave," says she.

"Give me a ham sandwich, please," says Englishman in a soft, sedate voice.

"Riorwhite," says the girl.

"I want a ham sandwich, that is all," says he, deferential.

"Riorwhite," repeats the girl with a pleasant snarl.

Englishman was up against it for fair and you couldn't blame him, for that girl's English was not unlike early Esperanto or Western Union code. Finny was convulsed with gaiety. He had to fill his mouth full of food and drink to keep from howling.

"Just a plain sandwich with ham between, nothing more," says the man in a courteous, gentle tone.

Maggie Murphy puts her fat, red hands on her hips and gives her natural adversary an awful look. Just as she was about to bellow the question with vigor I laid down my cup and looked at Englishman.

"Sir," says I, "she wants to know whether you care for rye bread or white bread."

"Well, well," says he to me with a laugh. "Thanks awfully."

Then he turns to Miss Murphy.

"White, please."

With that the girl went off, a scornful grin on her face. A moment later Englishman got out a notebook, laid it down on the table, and began to write, chuckling to himself all the while as if he'd located the lost joke of the Incas. Finny gave me a wink, and I knew in a minute that he knew what I knew—that Englishman was one of those writers that come now and then to these grassy slopes for inspiration and remuneration. My mind went back to Guatemala and the book, and I could hear a voice crying in the wilderness for revenge. I expected to see Finny take off his coat and terrify the earth, but he didn't.

When the girl brought the sandwich and hurled it obsequiously across the marble-topped table, Englishman puts away his notebook and got busy.

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"This is all very new and wonderful to me, don't you know," says he to me in his funny accent. "I arrived only this morning from London."

Finny turned his face to the wall and gritted his teeth, leaving me to attend to the conversation. There was an Anglo-Saxon upheaval coming. I could feel it in my bones.

"Yes," continues the stranger, "I am here to write my impressions of your great country."

NOW came a sickly silence. I fancied I could hear Finny's hand go to his hip. I knew there was murder in his heart; for if ever there was a patriot with red, white and blue corpuscles in his blood it was my old pal. He never let a Fourth of July go by without personally massacring a few Central American Indians just to show the superiority of the North American nation.

I didn't like the look of things a bit. I began to wonder how far the nearest morgue was and whether they had any vacant beds. I knew sure as fate that Englishman had blighted and blistered his own career. Just as I was raking the coals of my memory to see whether murder was a penal offense here same as in Nicaragua and a few other places, Englishman takes out a wallet and hands me his card:

THE MARQUIS OF LANCASHIRE

You could have knocked me down with a sledge-hammer. I passed the card over to Finny without a word. It was all too sudden to suit me. Well, sir, I wish you could have seen that stormy-petrel pal of mine. He sat straight up in his chair and dropped his knife and fork, also his jaw. A moment like this; then he smoothed his hair with his hands and fixed his yellow-green tie. The bloodshed faded from his eyes and his face fairly glowed with reverence and respect. I never did see such a change in similitude.

"But I am not here to live in your gorgeous hotels and write of the effete, artificial class as others have done," went on the Marquis. "I am surfeited with high life and gracious company. I want to find out the truth about the real American—the laborer, the producer; the man who toils and sweats with his hands and his feet and makes millions of dollars for his master; the mainstay, the backbone of your great country."

Finny got right up on his feet and held out his horny hand. The shock deprived me of the power to eat.

"Your Royal Highness, I'm glad to know you," says he as affable as a reception committee that has hired a tugboat and a band to welcome some East Side politician just home from Aix-les-Bains. "Me and Bundy Hope has enough money to buy Worcestershire Palace or marry our sons and daughters off to dukes, princes and earls, but we're only a pair of plain, scrub men, unfettered by education and the more advanced forms of intelligence. At the same time, in ruminating around the cities, towns, villages and saloons of this famous strip of land called the U. S. A., we've stumbled on to a lot of incondensible information and advice that is not included in the inventory of colleges, academies, seminaries and reformatories. If, therefore, our services will be of any value to you in getting at the real truth about real America, they're at your disposal free, gratis, and without charge."

"My lord, I second the motion," says I, feeling proud to do homage to a man of noble blood.

The Marquis was very grateful. Then and there amid the clatter of iron and earthenware, the shouts of the waitresses and the mournful cries of the hungry of stomach, there began a genuine, international, hands-across-the-sea friendship that lasted unceasingly for quite a time.

HIS LORDSHIP had led a life of adventure in all parts of the world. He'd been a war correspondent out in Manchuria and in South Africa and a big-game hunter everywhere where there was game that had hopped, skipped, jumped or growled. I wish you could have heard him describing the battle of Waterloo—no, I mean Yalu—and the storming of Spion Kop, illustrating the position of the different columns, regiments, battalions and battleships with the different carving and spiking

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implements on the table. It was wonderful. And to think that two old American codgers like me and Finny were hobnobbing with a person of rank and noble blood, a man so refined and nice, full of anecdotes and lordly, baronial airs! He talked of Vienna and Mukden and Delagoa Bay and Liverpool as you or me would talk about Albany or Allentown. He had a pair of gold cuff buttons presented to him by General Nogi, a tie pin from General Cronje, a bracelet made out of the white hairs of a giraffe's tail, which is very rare, and a little gold god from some temple up in Burmah.

Suddenly the Marquis looked up at the clock. It was half past eight. We had been listening to his adventures nearly two hours, and it seemed like only ten minutes. His Royal Highness insisted on paying the bill, so we had to agree, not wishing to be unpolite. He was too tired to do any sight witnessing that night, so after arranging to meet for breakfast next morning we accompanied him as far as his hotel, Finny carrying both of his packages and monopolizing all the conversation with travelogues of our experiences in Guatemala, Nicaragua and Salvador, as well as a lot of statistical information about the average annual rainfall, the height of Pike's Peak, the number of saloons on the Bowery, the cost per mile of the eating-houses of the Santa Fé, and the width of Elephant Butte Dam.

I whispered to Finny that we ought to buy a bottle of wine before parting, but he said that wouldn't be proper at all, so we bade our aristocratic friend a most cordial good night. For a long time we trudged the streets in thoughtful and solitary silence. At last Finny spoke:

"I feel as if a little ablution and prayer would do me good," says he.

"I could drink a liqueur glass full of Pilsener myself," says I.

A few moments later we were seated opposite a couple of tankards of stormy billows in the Poodle Cat, a quiet little place infested by actors and writers and other New Yorkers without visible means of support.

"*Compañero*," says Finny, with repentance written all over his calloused face, "I never dreamed that titled people was so human and nice, but at the same time I'd like to be tarred and feathered and horsewhipped for kowtowing to that Marquis. He ain't any better'n you or me when it comes right down to brass tacks, is he?"

"Not a bit," says I. "If he was the General Superintendent of Siam he wouldn't cut no ice or snow with me. But let's turn the conversation into more cheerful channels and meditate upon the manifold treacheries of life. It hardens the fibers of my spirit to think what fools we've been."

All those in favor said aye and for an hour or more we talked lightly about Hindu literature, Wiesbaden prunes, and Arabian simoons. But the more we drank, the more sad and melancholy Finny got.

"THERE'S something on your mind, old boy," says I. "What is it? Tell it to papa."

"I'm full of remorse and shame," says Finny, harking back to the old theme. "I thought I was immune to all this baronial bunco. No wonder the girls fall for it. The Marquis is a fine fellow and all that, but Providence delivered him into our hands for a purpose. Now let's cut the painter on all the sentimental stuff and remember that never-to-be-forgotten book down in Guatemala. Of all the crimes amongst men and atrocities between nations that was the worst. It was full of abuse and slander, an insult to the greatest aggregation of people that ever wore trousers and skirts or sent a battleship on a picnic round the world.

"By the signs of the zodiac and the position of the new moon in the heavens, I read that the reason this animated beef eater was sent to us was for us to get back at the slandering scribes that have visited our shores during recent years by sending this particular one back to his native land so plumb full of allegories about America that people over here will bust their seams laughing when they read his tale. You and me have knocked about a bit, Bundy, and we're wise to the game. Can't we rig up a string of sophistries about the land of the free that'll make London look like a sick cat when they're published? That'll put a stop to 'My Impressions of America' for centuries to come and throw the ship news reporters out of a job."

"It's a mean trick to play on the English," says I, "but they deserve it. We never said a single wrong word about them. If our suffragette women went about damaging and devastating the landscape like they do over there, I'd hate to think what

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they'd say about American girls. What do we say about the English? Nothing. We mind our own business in a decent way."

And thus the deep, dark plot was hatched. Till the Poodle Cat closed its doors for the night we sat in the corner getting up the program of events.

NEXT morning, promptly at nine o'clock, we called on the Marquis. His lordship, who was dressed mainly in a vest of many colors with buttons as big as arc lamps, greeted us very profusely and we went in to breakfast. Our noble guest ordered a ladylike collation of tea and toast, but nothing like that for us. In a very tired, blasé way we asked for a satisfying anaconda meal consisting of apple sauce, oatmeal, scrambled eggs, minced ham, corn muffins, popovers and buckwheat cakes, and when the consignment arrived we calmly piled all the food on one plate, chopped it up with a knife and fork, poured cream and maple syrup over the mass, stirred it, and commenced to eat.

The waiter fell over backward, and when the manager saw how me and Finny had desecrated a perfectly good meal, he sent for the house detective, a little, thin, broad-shouldered man about ten feet high. Taking a seat at the next table, the sleuth eyed us carefully, ready to spring at any moment in case of emergency. I think he had a patrol wagon waiting outside, but I couldn't swear to it.

As for the Marquis, he was struck with dumb palsy. He just sat still in his chair and gaped. After a while, however, he recovered the use of his right hand and devoted two thousand words in his notebook to the Great American Breakfast.

"Wonderful," says he. "Simply wonderful. Typically American."

That mess of pottage came near killing Finny and me, but we ate every crumb of it. I couldn't see my own face, but there was a lot of anguish in Finny's. I felt as if I'd won first prize at a steak-eating contest at Nifty Joe's or tried to outeat Bismarck. It was an awful piece of procedure. The Marquis again insisted on paying the check and we let him do it because we were too weak to raise any objections.

Two hours later, when we were able to walk to a street car, we conveyed our host downtown to a little hotel on Broadway over a hundred years old. This place has no fire-escapes to speak of, so the Fire Department has compelled the management to put in the corner of each room a coil of heavy rope with a stout iron hook at the end in order that guests may slide down to safety in case of fire. Into one of these modern suites we took the royal scribe.

"This," says Finny, "is the oldest hotel in America and the only one in the world that caters to people that want to commit suicide. If you are getting old, or tired of life, or weary with long continued family trouble, you simply state the case to the manager and give the name of your favorite undertaker. Then for the very reasonable price of two dollars you get a room like this, with a rope and everything complete, including the pens, ink and paper with which to attend to your farewell correspondence. Many a married man has laid down his heavy burden here and sought a quiet haven in the infernal regions."

The Marquis was spellbound.

"Wonderful, wonderful," says he. "You Americans are so original and enterprising. Always the first in the world."

Then out came the book and in went a thousand words.

Next we took his Grace down Wall Street to the curb. Here the brokers were shouting and gesticulating in the customary way behind a roped enclosure.

"What is all this?" asked the Marquis, perplexed.

"Your Honor," says Finny, "this is the greatest object lesson in America to-day. You have doubtless read in the London *Times*, *Herald*, *Tribune*, *American* or whatever paper you read when you are at home, that grafting is the most popular pastime in this country. That is all painfully true, I grieve to say, but once in a while a man burns his fingers and gets a long sentence, the Supreme Court having just ruled that grafting with intent to defraud is dishonest.

"These are the grafters that have been caught to date. No matter whether it rains or shines they are brought here every morning of the year as a shame unto themselves and as a warning to others to tread the narrow path and learn to obey at least one out of the Twelve Commandments.

"You will notice every once in a while that they gesticulate with their hands and feet and make loud animal noises. They are kicking because of their harsh treatment. Some of them are very wealthy and

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are accustomed to private baths and taxicabs and whisky."

The Marquis was amazed beyond words.

"You Americans beat everything," says he, taking out his notebook.

Five hundred words.

A WHILE later we took our distinguished visitor to a swell restaurant on Fulton Street for a little refreshment and an other little shock.

"This, my dear Marquis, is a typical downtown lunchery," says Finny, after the three head waiters had squeezed us through the crowd to an empty table and the order had been given. "You will observe as you cast your eyes around the room that a great many men are here sitting under palm trees with women who are obviously not their wives. In each case it is the millionaire-boss and his Madonna-like stenographer. In this way the American employer endears himself to the gentle, skirted toilers in his office. I tell you this that you may see that even in the busiest business man of our land sociability and sentimentality run close to eight hundred dollars to the ton."

"Wonderful," ejaculates the Marquis. "Simply wonderful."

He was just about to write up the restaurant when the waiter appeared with his roast beef and mashed potatoes. Me and Finny not being hungry after the conglomerate we had for breakfast, contented ourselves with a light repast of corn on the cob and ice cream. Using the corn cobs as spoons, we dipped the thin ends into the ice cream and licked it up in that artistic fashion. Then, when we were through, we each put a cob of corn into our hip pockets. The Marquis was surprised beyond speech and so were the people at the next table. I thought they'd have to carry the black-haired blonde out on a stretcher.

One thousand words.

Lunch over, we strolled about the streets eating cigars and preaching false doctrines till six o'clock came, at which time we took our illustrious guest to Brooklyn Bridge to see the awful crowd during the rush hour. After gazing rapturously for ten long minutes at the surging mob of man and womankind, his lordship says:

"This is the most wonderful of all. There must be countless homes in Brooklyn."

Finny grinned graciously.

"Homes?" says he. "These people are not going home. They're going to see the murder. Didn't you read the paper this morning?"

"Murder?" gasped the Marquis, his eyes opening wide. "Tell me all about it, please. I did not read the paper."

I blew my nose to keep from laughing and wondered how far the prevaricator would go.

"Well, it's this way, Highness," says Finny, sticking his hands in his pockets. "Four well known Brooklyn politicians were playing poker for high stakes last night and one of them was caught cheating, a crime that ranks next to body snatching and burglary in this country. The other three politicians have applied for permission from the police to murder the man as he enters Diamond Joe's saloon on the corner of Fulton and Flatbush Streets about seven o'clock to-night and that permission has been granted. That's all there is to it."

The Marquis looked dubious.

"To a narrow-minded Briton that seems almost unbelievable," says he.

"But it's a fact," says I, stifling a smile.

His Grace wanted to cross the Bridge to see the execution, but Finny made a pooh-poohing feint with his hand and said there'd be lots of murders in New York before the week was out without going over to Brooklyn.

Two chapters.

TO WIND up the uneventful day we went to Chinatown for dinner in a big room draped with Oriental curtains and lanterns and brass Buddhas and incense.

"This place is run by a son of the Emperor of China," says Finny. "Every waiter in the place is a nobleman by birth like yourself. They all left Peking on account of some trouble between the Board of Estimate and the Mayor."

The Marquis was delighted with the restaurant, for it reminded him of the East. He began to tell us about the Yang, that big river that empties itself into Hongkong; the Great Wall that reaches from Tokio to Turkestan, the Moulmein Pagoda, and the Taj Mahal. When the pigtailed waiter came slithering along for the order, his Highness gave it to him in Chinese, but unfortunately for the local color, Quong Chang Finnigan was born and raised in Oakland, Cal., and he couldn't speak his

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native language without an interpreter. As usual, Finny fills the breach. Says he:

"Bring some chop suey, Conus Islus clam chowdush, and anything else in the boiled New England line that a Mexican dollar would buy in a Shanghai slum."

Q. C. Finnigan understood perfectly, and in due season he appeared with a trayful of the mystic mélange of the East, the only living thing that a white man could recognize without a guide-book being boiled rice.

"We Americans love Oriental food," says Finny, as he took about half a pound of Chinese hash in his fingers, threw back his head, and dropped the stuff slowly into his mouth. "It is so nourishing and romantic, especially when eaten in the native fashion."

Of course, I knew Finny had got Central American Indians mixed with Chinese Chinamen, and though there were knives and forks on the table, I had to follow his example and eat my dinner in the greasy, prehistoric way.

"Wonderful, simply wonderful," cries the Marquis. "There is no limit to the daring and democracy of you Americans."

We ate enough Orientalism that night to sink the entire fleet of the Toyen Kisen Kaisha, and five hundred words were dedicated to the gorge. Finny was radiant with fiendish triumph.

About nine o'clock we took the Marquis back to his hotel so we could retire and laugh ourselves to sleep. But we hadn't been in our own room five minutes before we began to feel sick. Soon we were all entangled in convulsions, spasms, and other interior disorders. Finny went pale as the bedsheets. I crawled over to the telephone and asked for a doctor.

"It's that medley we had this morning," says I. "We've got an illustrated stomach."

"You're wrong," says Finny. "It's that Chinese delicatessen. We've got bubonic plague."

BUT we were both wrong. The doctor said that we had a joint attack of acute indigestion and he calmed our fears and pains with a hypodermic injection of Morpheus. Then, before we dropped unconscious, he took up a collection and left. Next morning we were still alive, though in a very low state of health, so we got the bellboy to break the news to the Marquis. In spite of his title that man was a gentleman. He came right over to see us, bringing a bunch of carnations in his own hands.

"Marq," says Finny, sitting up in his bed, "I'm afraid the rubberneck wagon won't sail to-day. We're both as weak as a brace of vivisected cats. That Chagres fever never leaves a man when once it gets a strangle hold on his nervous system."

"Don't worry," says his lordship. "I'll stay with you and keep you company. You'll both be all right to-morrow."

Then he picks up our clothes that we had hung up on the floor the previous night, puts them away in the clothes closet, and fixes everything like a woman would. All day long he was in the room, propping us up with pillows, getting us soup and dry toast, and telling us more of his adventures. This, mind you, from a blue blooded aristocrat, a hobnobber with royalty, a man of education and refined taste. Why, an American wouldn't have done that for his own brother. Not by a darned sight.

Finally Finny could stand it no longer. While his lordship was at the 'phone ordering something from the commissary, he told me that he was going to confess his sins.

"Go ahead," says I in a whisper. "I'll forgive the English now for all they've done and all they're going to do. They're a nice race of people; very nice."

So in a voice full of shame and humiliation, Finny informed the Marquis how we had been telling him a lot of atrocious untruths and lies about America. The room was very quiet. Except for my old pal's rasping notes you could have heard a shoe drop. His lordship sat with his arms folded, his mustache drooping, listening to every word. When Finny concluded his confession, the man of noble birth got up, a disappointed look on his English face.

"I'm sorry you told me this," says he, making a note on the cuff of his shirt. "You've spoiled some awfully good stories, don't you know. But never mind. I bear no malice toward either of you. Life is short and champagne is the best thing on earth for a sick stomach. Let us rejoice."

AND we did. He was a fine man, was the Marquis, endowed with all the elements of a gentleman. When the wine got to working, Finny and me sang "La Paloma" in Latin American and made a speech in English. Finally the management complained of the noise of

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revelry, so we wound up the jubilation proceedings with "America," "God Save the King," and "My Wife's Gone to the Country." Then after arranging to take breakfast with us in the morning, the Marquis shook hands and left.

"Bundy," says Finny, as we helped each other back into bed, "what them fellows say in their story books about America is right when you come to think of it. We do boast and brag, and we do lynch colored persons and act like wild men at times. But we don't like to be told about it no more than a kid likes to be spanked. We're a young tribe of people, that's all, and we haven't graduated from the high school yet. All we need is a little time."

"That's right," says I. "From now on we'll help the Marquis all we can—stick to him like a brother as long as he remains in our country and protect him from crooks and confidence men. Then when he publishes his book we'll do a little missionary work among our own fellow people by buying a few thousand copies and handing them out to the rich and needy. It's just a matter of education, that's all."

And Finny seconded the motion.

Next morning we felt able to manipulate ourselves all right so we waited around the lobby for the Marquis. But ten o'clock came without any sign of him. Fearing lest he might be sick this time, we telephoned to his hotel.

"He left last night," said the clerk, "and did not say where he was going."

We couldn't understand it at all.

"There's a mistake somewhere," says Finny. "We'll go over and investigate after we've had something to eat."

BUT when we came to pay for our breakfast we made a discovery. Both our wallets had gone! Somehow instinct told us that we had collided with something new in buncoism. Bowed with grief, we went to Police Headquarters to report the loss.

"Claimed he was a Marquis, did he?" said the lieutenant on duty with a most irreverent laugh. "Not on your life. I recognize the man from your description. English Charlie we call him. He's been in and out of here for ten years and done more than one bit up the river. He's a slick crook all right and probably trailed you for a couple of weeks before he introduced himself. I'm afraid you've kissed your money good-by. But wait a second. I'll get you his photograph from the gallery just to be sure."

And he did.

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The EMPEROR'S CHIN

by ALBERT SONNICHSEN

CHAPTER I

DAMAGING EVIDENCE

ALL things considered, there is obvious reason why Dr. Leon Savrov, field chief of the London International News Syndicate should have made the Bulgarian Capital his headquarters while making a special study of current political events in Russia. Here he could arrange and file his notes without fear of a sudden fit of conscientiousness on the part of the police. It is true the Doctor was not an Anarchist; he was not even a Revolutionist, but he was certainly one of the most efficient gatherers of news and other bits of queer information on the Continent.

Occasionally he made a flying visit across the Black Sea, but more often he would meet one of his agents in Varna or Bourgas, whence they could arrive on the night boat from Odessa. His most efficient collaborator was Everett Avery, officially known as correspondent of the London *Courier* in Odessa, a paper whose stanch defense of all things as they are earned its representatives a glad official welcome in Russia.

The Doctor was just preparing to retire for the night one evening, when the hotel porter knocked at his door and handed in a telegram. Dr. Savrov closed the door and opened the envelope. It was from Avery, despatched from a small Rumanian town just across the Russian frontier. The message was brief, but emphatic:

Come, and come quick. Something more important than business.

The Doctor looked at his watch, then began dressing.

Next day he registered at Avery's hotel in Odessa as Maximilian de Vigny, traveling salesman for an English agricultural machine manufacturing company. The passport with which he traveled was genuine enough, with this slight modification: the real Maximilian de Vigny, an old friend of Savrov, had retired from active business and was at that moment cultivating prize strawberries in Geneva. And such slight changes in the passport as difference in personal appearance might require could easily have been effected by one much less expert than the Doctor. He found Avery, the young, clean-shaven American journalist, pacing his room and smoking a black cigar. Never had he seen his friend so manifestly disturbed.

"My Heaven, Doctor!" he cried. "I've been counting every second since I sent the wire. I'd apologize for running you into this risk, but wait until you hear what it's all about."

"Well, out with it. Is the Czar going to abdicate? But no, that would be business. Have one of my cigars; it will be more soothing—to me, at least."

AVERY had paused, chewing his cigar and staring, as if undecided where to begin.

"No, it's not business," he said. "Of course, it's directly in line with your professional interests, and your best abilities. That's why I simply had to send for you. But it concerns a friend—your friend and mine; Olga Andreavna."

"Ah!" The Doctor smiled tolerantly.

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"I know," continued Avery, "that you've always insisted that we should never meddle in the internal affairs of the revolutionary organizations. It was a wise policy; we have their fullest confidence and all alike have trusted us with such information as no other news agency can ever hope to acquire. But in this case we shall have to make our first exception. In fact, all are agreed that you ought to. You are the one man who can sift the truth out of this mess. I can't make head or tail of it; they've shown me all the evidence——"

"What the deuce are you talking about?" demanded Savrov.

"I am confused," apologized Avery. "Here are the plain facts. The other day the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Socialist-Revolutionary Organization came here from Geneva and called a special meeting of the local members. He produced what appears to be documentary evidence that the Sectional Secretary, Olga Andreavna, is a secret agent of the police; that she has been in the pay of the police to betray her associates."

Savrov's cigar paused in midair.

"Thank Heaven!" cried Avery, "I see you don't believe it!"

"My friend," replied Savrov, coldly, "I believe nothing until it has been proven to me. My methods are purely scientific. I know only that there is a spy somewhere close to headquarters. At least five persons have been betrayed and hanged as a result. But go on."

"The documentary evidence," continued Avery, "consists of an anonymous letter, received by the Committee in Switzerland, with which is enclosed a receipt for five thousand rubles from a prominent police official. That receipt was signed by Olga."

"Well," demanded Savrov, "how did Olga explain it?"

Avery's lips were white.

"She admitted the signature was genuine."

He paused.

"All she added was that it was private business. Great Heaven, Doctor, the girl doesn't seem to realize what that admission means! What private business can there be between a member of the Central Committee of the Socialist-Revolutionary Organization and a *gendarmerie* officer, whose business it is to hunt them down, to destroy them?"

SAVROV remained silent a while, chewing his cigar.

"It is a very serious charge," he said, finally. "After the late executions, especially after the hanging of that poor girl in Kiev, there will be no mercy for a spy. Have you seen Olga since then?"

"Yes, we left the meeting together. In spite of her usual self-possession, she was dazed. She said she simply could not understand it herself—she would not talk until she had thought it over. All she would agree to was that I should send for you. Perhaps she will make a full explanation to you."

"You did well. We must see her later. First I want to see the proofs and get an intelligent understanding of how the case stands against her. We must see the Secretary at once. Who is it? Goldman?"

"Yes; he's stopping near by. He's been instructed to gather corroborative evidence."

"Good; let us see him at once."

They left the hotel. Avery led the way down one of the smaller streets, deeper into the heart of the city.

"Did Goldman receive the letter personally? Was it directed to him?" asked Savrov.

"Yes," replied Avery, divining the Doctor's thought, "but you can't pick a flaw there. In the first place, there isn't the slightest reason why he should want to injure Olga. She admitted that much herself to me. On the contrary, she was one of that group of five whose escape from the Kiev Fortress he organized. Every one of them would have been sent to Siberia. It was one of the sensations of the time.

"Aside from that, he's killed his man, too. You remember the assassination of Prince Stephan Mirsky, in Kiev, the fellow who massacred a whole village in Smolensk—so outrageous an affair that even Europe was aroused. It was Goldman that fixed him; he dropped a bomb on him from the upper window of a store building as the Prince was driving to the railroad station. After that he was put on the Executive Committee as representative of the Fighting Wing."

"Yes, I remember," replied Savrov. "A foolish business. The Prince was to have been dismissed anyway. Still, he was a tremendous loss to the Government, for with all his brutality he was crafty as an old fox and he was the organizing spirit in

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the Police Department. I always wondered how he should have allowed himself to be finished off so easily. It was always a mystery to me."

THEY entered the courtyard of a third rate hotel, a sort of inn where prosperous *moujiks* stopped when in town on market days. After climbing two flights of narrow stairs Avery knocked at a door and in response to a call they entered a small, dingy room looking out on the courtyard. At a table, near the one window, sat Goldman; short, dark, though stockily built, well past his youth. His broad, heavy face smiled good-naturedly as he peered over his spectacles to recognize his visitors. Then he rose quickly and greeted them in a rumbling, bass voice.

"Dr. Savrov! A great pleasure! I met you in Paris once, but probably you have forgotten me."

"No," replied Savrov, with offhand geniality, "I remember you well as a fellow journalist. You did some excellent work for our syndicate once. All the better; we shall understand each other, though I am not here as a journalist. I am interested in Olga Andreavna personally. I have not seen her since my arrival from Sofia this morning, but she is an old friend and I have no doubt she will entrust me with her defense. I realize that this is irregular, as I am not a member, but you all know me well enough to waive so slight an infringment of the rules."

Goldman intensified his smile and waved his hand.

"With pleasure on my part, Doctor, and I shall also assume the responsibility of answering for my colleagues. They have assigned to me the unpleasant duty of prosecuting attorney in this case. Let us hope that you will deliver me a convincing defeat; nothing would please me better. My heart is not in my work. You would like to see the proofs, of course?"

"Certainly, and all the facts you have gathered to corroborate them."

Goldman reached into a grip under the table and pulled out a brown envelope. From this he extracted two slips of paper which he spread and smoothed out on the table before him.

"Here is the anonymous letter," he said. "In itself it is of no importance. The writer states that he is a clerk in the Police Department and accidentally found the enclosed paper. He signs himself 'a sympathizer with the Revolution.' But here is the receipt:

To His Excellency, Prince Alexander Andreavitch Mirsky: I beg to acknowledge your kindness in forwarding me a draft for five thousand rubles, received this date. Olga A. M.

"THIS is the damaging evidence. Observe, the date is recent; July 27, 1907—only three months ago. And above all, Olga Andreavna has not only acknowledged it as her own signature, but she has refused to explain. Private business; but—what can one say to that?"

Goldman shrugged his shoulders and spread out the palms of his hands.

"Is this the Prince Alexander," asked Savrov, "who is now Assistant Chief of the Provincial *Gendarmerie* here and was at one time secretary to his uncle, the late Prince Stephen?"

"Yes, the same. His career has been short, but brilliant, due to his uncle's influence, no doubt."

"But is it not unusual that an official in his position should deal directly with secret police agents? Does a sectional *gendarmerie* chief make personal payments to the many secret agents in his department?"

"It is unusual," admitted Goldman, "but not at all without precedent. Some of your own exposures have shown almost similar instances. The chief may have one or two very confidential agents, known only to himself, who supply him not only with information regarding our organizations, but keep a watch over the regular agents as well, to see that they are not playing a double game. And this young Prince Mirsky is just as energetic and shrewd as his uncle was."

"Have you any more facts?"

"Yes; suspicious circumstances. Nearly four years ago, after Olga Andreavna had taken her diploma in Brussels University, she came to Paris, lived in the Russian colony and there joined the Organization. As our friend Avery knows well himself, she suffered extreme poverty then. Her only income was what she earned from him translating articles from the Russian papers into English and from tutoring in English and the natural sciences.

"Suddenly she gave the Organization a contribution of over three thousand rubles,

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after which she asked to be sent to Russia as a propagandist. Still more, there are at least three reputable members of the Organization who saw her leaving the Russian Consulate."

Avery wiped the perspiration from his forehead. Savrov sat frowning.

"Is this all?" he demanded.

"Yes; that is all, but you will admit that is enough."

"The circumstances seem very strong against her," admitted Savrov slowly. "How much time have I to investigate?"

"On the tenth, four days hence, all the members of the Central Committee will meet in Sofia and Olga will be fairly tried. She has been told this, but the exact place should not be told her until she arrives in Sofia. I shall, however, confide it to you. We have decided on Alexie Ivanovitch's Summer cottage in Boyana. It is a secluded spot at this time of the year where we are not likely to be disturbed or watched."

"Very well, I shall observe your caution; it is only proper. And now, suppose she has no logical explanation which can be verified?"

Goldman shrugged his shoulders.

"You know our laws," he replied gloomily. "We make no distinctions of sex. But if Olga is in such a position she would be foolish to appear. Of course, that would be equivalent to an admission of guilt, but in that case no harm would come to her. She has made a serious mistake already in refusing instant explanation. Surely an innocent person needs no time to think over what explanation to offer. And every hour's delay lessens the weight of the explanation she does finally offer."

Savrov rose.

"Well, I shall see you in Sofia. *Au revoir.*"

AVERY and Savrov walked most of the distance back to their hotel in silence.

"What do you think?" demanded Avery finally. "For goodness' sake, say something, even if it's unpleasant."

"My dear fellow," began Savrov, "you are somewhat temperamental. Never get discouraged at a first impression. I realize that the evidence is strongly against her, but as yet I have seen nothing convincing. Several little facts stand out against Goldman's theory.

"First of all, if she were guilty, why should she not have denied the genuineness of the signature? Such a lie would be insignificant beside the big lie of living a police spy's career. Another thing; a spy does not use the same name on both sides. However, why speculate when no doubt Olga will explain to us presently? We must go to her at once."

Avery gripped his friend's arm with a nervous, yet an affectionate, pressure.

"The hotel is on the way to her lodgings," he replied, "and she may have come there or sent word, making an appointment. Let us drop in."

As they arrived Avery inquired of the commissionnaire if any one had called for him and in reply he was given a sealed envelope. Avery read aloud:

> My Dear Everett: I must beg indulgence of you and the Doctor. There are certain matters which I must investigate before I can see you. I shall come early in the morning. Olga.

"Foolish girl!" cried Savrov angrily. "She seems to study how best to injure herself. This is not the action of a guilty person, only an exaggerated self-reliance; wilfulness. But others may reason less logically."

He stamped up and down the room in impotent fury.

"However," he continued, partly recovering himself, "we must go on without her. You must see Prince Alexander to-night."

"What!"

"Why not? There is nothing to lose and you may gain something. After all, he is not the brute his uncle was. He is a reactionary from religious conviction, not from self interest. Such men are always more human. A man becomes a beast only when his material interests are attacked. He may be willing to explain this receipt. At least, his words or his behavior may suggest something to us. I would go myself, but—my passport is not quite regular, as you know. You are not compromised—a foreign correspondent has a wide acquaintance even among Revolutionists."

CHAPTER II

AVERY LISTENS AND TALKS

SHORTLY after dark they hired an *izvotchik* and drove out into the suburbs. After discharging the driver they walked

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on for ten or fifteen minutes until they came to a small, isolated villa with an extensive garden, all surrounded by a high brick wall.

"I shall wait outside," said Savrov. "Now, brace yourself up and see what you can squeeze out of him."

Avery entered and rang. A footman ushered him into an anteroom and took his card. Certainly the Prince lived unpretentiously; it might have been the waiting room of a prosperous physician.

Avery had been waiting some time when he heard a murmur of voices through a folding door in the rear of the room. Evidently there was the police official's study. The murmur became more distinct; a masculine voice was raised in an angry tone. Avery could not distinguish what was said, but once he thought the angry voice exclaimed, "No, I shall not," and again, "This foolishness must come to an end." The voice died down suddenly. Again Avery waited.

Finally the folding doors were thrown open and Prince Alexander Mirsky appeared. He seemed quite young, hardly thirty; his figure was tall and slender and of military erectness. He was remarkably handsome. Save for a slight mustache and a goatee of a golden bronze, he was cleanshaven.

It was obvious that the Prince had only just then been informed that a visitor was waiting for him. He bowed and smiled cordially; then looked casually at Avery's card, which he held in his hand. Avery distinctly saw his brows contract and a puzzled look came over his face.

"Everett Avery," he repeated, half aloud; then, more distinctly, "pardon me, Mr. Avery, if I have kept you waiting."

He eyed Avery keenly, then added, "I have just had another visitor."

He paused again, then smiled and advanced very cordially, with his hand extended. Something in his pleasant features stirred a vague memory in Avery's mind.

Avery plunged into his business at once.

"As a newspaper correspondent," he began, "you will understand that I have formed a wide acquaintance among all classes of your society. In this way I have become rather intimate with certain persons whom you may consider—well, not——"

"The Nihilists," smiled the Prince. "I understand, and even envy you your opportunities. While I can not, of course, agree with their opinions, there are many charming personalities among them."

Considerably encouraged, Avery proceeded:

"You are right. I have enjoyed their society, quite aside from political discussion. Among those whom I have known best is one, a woman, whose acquaintance I made some years ago in Paris. Some time later——"

"You are talking about Olga Andreavna, are you not?" interrupted the Prince, with a peculiar smile.

"You know, then!"

"Should that surprise you?" demanded the Prince, with the same peculiar smile. "Has she sent you here?"

"No," replied Avery, emphatically, "she has not. This is entirely on my own account."

THE Prince remained thoughtful a moment.

"What can I do for you?" he demanded, finally. "You want me to make a statement explaining that receipt in a way that will clear her of the suspicion that she has been betraying her associates into our hands? Well, who would believe it? I might convince you. But you could not convince them. Naturally, they would say that I wanted to clear my own agents."

"Perhaps; that is not really what I want. But you could suggest some means by which I could find proof of her innocence?"

"I should suppose she could do that better than I."

The logic of this reply slapped Avery square in the face.

"I do not think she realizes the full significance of the accusation," said he. "Practically, the charge means that she is responsible for the execution of five members of the Organization, one of them a young girl under seventeen."

The Prince's brows contracted.

"We, too, are sometimes brutal," he replied. "But, you may remember that those five were arrested by the Central Government officials, while I am a local official; I am a Provincial Chief."

"That is only of significance in your calling my attention to it. Naturally I presume you all work together, central and local officials. Am I to understand, then——?"

"I am surprised," interrupted the Prince, "that she has not explained more fully to

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you. Obviously, if she is so reticent to her —most intimate friends, she would prefer that I also remained silent."

Avery's brow grew clammy. The Prince was watching him keenly; he observed the journalist's agitation.

"Do not misunderstand me," he added quickly. "I do not wish even to imply that Olga Andreavna is one of my agents. I may have gained all my information regarding the situation from—well, from my other agents. In fact, I must remain absolutely silent on this matter."

"Even when a word from you might save her life?"

Avery thought he had touched the Prince. The official's mouth twitched.

"This is ridiculous!" he exclaimed, angrily. "She is not in a prison! Let her save herself. Let her go her way."

"But that would be an admission of guilt. It would be her moral death."

The Prince gave his shoulders a vicious shrug.

"I do not understand Nihilist ethics," he replied. "I hope I am tolerant, but with such rank fanaticism I can not sympathize."

Avery rose.

"Is this final—you can not help me?" he demanded.

For the first time the Prince seemed to hesitate. Avery paused, but again the Prince's face hardened.

"No," he said, finally, "I can not help you."

Avery went. He found Savrov at a corner of the brick wall. Apparently Savrov had been waiting in the shadow of a row of trees that lined one side of the estate. They walked on, Avery giving a detailed account of the interview. When he had finished Savrov remained silent, as if he had not heard.

"What's the matter?" demanded Avery.

"Nothing—yes. I may as well tell you. I have a very disagreeable incident to report."

Avery's heart sank.

"After you went in," continued the Doctor, "I walked down that side street, toward the rear of the garden. I had been standing there under the shade of the trees about twenty minutes when I heard a bolt being drawn. A door opened in the wall. I stepped back into the deepest shadow in time to avoid being seen by a veiled woman who passed out."

"Well?" Avery held his breath.

"In spite of her veil I recognized her. It was Olga."

They walked on for half an hour in absolute silence. Avery was the first to speak.

"You believe her guilty?" he asked.

"As I told you before," replied Savrov, "I do not judge by face values. And yet, here is Olga, living in Russia on a false passport, known by the police to be a member of the Central Committee, visiting the chief of *gendarmerie* in his own home, veiling herself not to be recognized. Frankly I am puzzled. I do not see a gleam of light anywhere. However, there is one last hope. She has promised to explain to us in the morning."

They observed another long silence.

"ONE thing especially puzzles me," said the Doctor, suddenly. "Three months ago Olga was here in Odessa, was she not? Yes. Nor has she been abroad for at least a year. The receipt was written, according to its date, only three months ago. Yet the paper on which the receipt is written is not of the kind one buys here in Odessa. I dare say it can be had in some of the offices of foreign firms, but it is distinctly a French paper. Have you ever observed that Olga has a marked preference for such a paper, which must be very difficult to buy here? No?

"Well, added to that, I observed that the top of the paper was not quite square, as if it had been clipped off with a pair of shears. On the very edge is a slight mark, as if some writing had been just barely eliminated. What could that writing be? Obviously not the date, for that is there. It could only be the place from which she was writing. There must, therefore, be some reason why Olga's unknown accuser should have wished to hide that."

"Doctor," replied Avery, with difficulty, "I may as well tell you all I know."

He paused, then continued.

"When I saw the Prince, he struck me as very familiar. I tried to remember where I had seen him before. Finally it all came back to me.

"One evening, three years ago, in Paris, while Olga was translating for me, I suddenly found I had a piece of work which I wanted her to do immediately; something I wanted to telegraph that night. I went to her lodgings, hoping to find her in. I

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met a young man coming out of her doorway. He had the collar of a heavy overcoat up around his ears—it was raining, I remember. But I know now it was Prince Mirsky.

"When I saw Olga a few minutes later, she was very much agitated. I didn't think much of the incident at the time. A week later I went with her to the bank to identify her in cashing a draft for just five thousand rubles. So even if there is a mistake in the date, it gives me very little comfort. However, the whole Revolution can go to the deuce before I tell them a word about it."

They spoke no more. As they separated in the corridor outside Avery's room, Savrov said:

"I somehow feel that Olga will clear up this puzzle for us in the morning. After all, we are speculating ourselves black in the face and she has the whole explanation ready for us. Rest assured, it will all turn out well."

CHAPTER III

AVERY BEGINS TO SEE LIGHT

AVERY was awake all the night. First he read, then he walked the floor and again tried to read. At dawn he went down to the café and tried to interest himself in the morning papers over a cup of strong, black coffee. Then he went out for a walk —toward Olga's lodgings.

"She went out an hour ago," the landlady told him.

He returned quickly to the hotel, fearing she would not find him in. She had not been there. Savrov had just got up and they breakfasted together. As they were finishing, the commissionnaire came into the café and gave Avery a sealed letter. He tore it open, read it, and passed it on to the Doctor in silence. It read:

> Forgive me if I am forced to disappoint you again, but as I feel now I can not see you. You can do nothing for me. I have only one hope left, and that can only be realized by making a long journey. Whether I succeed or fail, I shall still appear before the Committee in Sofia. Perhaps I shall be able to explain then; if not, I shall still be ready to face the result. Do not try to find me; I have already left the city. OLGA.

Avery and Savrov went up-stairs to the latter's room.

"When do you return?" demanded Avery.

"By the 10:20 train, through Rumania."

"All right, I shall go with you. I want to wind up our business relations. I am going back to the States—I'll try farming."

"You are taking this very seriously," remarked Savrov, gravely. "It is curious; I have never known any foreigner become so thoroughly imbued with the Russian spirit.

"After all, from an English or an American point of view, Olga is accused of nothing reprehensible in itself. To a Russian a police spy is more abhorrent than he who commits any crime, but to you it should not mean so much. Let us suppose, only suppose, that during a period of extreme poverty she—well, gave in to temptation and accepted police money. Would you throw her out for that?"

Avery did not reply immediately. He remained thoughtful.

"I think you deserve a full explanation," he said, finally. "I am not going to throw Olga out, as you call it. I am going to Sofia, you may be sure, and I am going to see that no harm comes to her, even if I have to send the whole Central Committee to the deuce. Of course, the most important thing is that she should square herself with them; I realize what that means to her. But, failing in that, I think I shall persuade her to come with me to America."

Savrov raised his eyebrows.

"AH!" HE exclaimed. "Then there is even more between you than I expected—more than a very old and close friendship."

He rose and placed his hand affectionately on the younger man's shoulder.

"A touch of romance rouses even an old fellow like myself. But have courage; the fight is not yet over and I am in it with you to the end."

He smiled with mischievous geniality.

"Courage, my brother; I promise you we shall solve this riddle and I shall yet attend your wedding."

Avery began laughing, as if at some hidden, rather bitter joke. The Doctor's face took on a puzzled look.

"You will not attend my wedding, Doctor," laughed Avery, "for the simple reason it's too late. I am already married. Olga has been my legally wedded wife for over three years."

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"What!" Savrov stared. "Your wife!" he almost shouted.

Avery smiled again, rather bitterly.

"Perhaps I have overstated the situation," he said. "I should qualify the statement——"

"Qualify the statement!" cried the Doctor. "Have you gone mad with worry! One does not marry by degrees. Either you are married, or you are not. You seem to imply that you are almost married, but not quite; that Olga is only partly your wife."

"It really amounts to that," said Avery, calmly. "Legally, by the laws of the United States of America, she is my wife, but that's all. Sit down. We have plenty of time, and I'll tell you the whole story.

"I am only going to give you the facts, tell you what happened. Sentiment and emotions you must fill in from your imagination.

"When Olga worked for me in Paris I was not in love with her. She was a little too strange and mysterious. I didn't understand Russian women as I do now, nor how the abnormal conditions in Russia reacted on them. But I did become immensely interested in her and we got to be very intimate friends. To me she was always like one of the heroines stepped out of Turgenef's novels and she appealed to my imagination.

"Naturally, when she told me she was leaving within a week for Russia, to agitate Revolution among the people, the romance seemed to take a rather tragic turn to me. I knew even then what that sort of thing means. You know—the survivors are so few that the very fact of their surviving makes them famous.

"At that time I was reading one of Stepniak's most interesting romances. The heroine wants to go abroad and study in college, but her parents won't let her. So a young fellow, a student, obligingly comes forward—a mere acquaintance—and he offers to marry her. They elope, are married, and he leaves her at the church door and she never sees him again. But as a married woman she can do as she pleases; she goes abroad, studies and lives under the protection of the name of a gentleman whom she has only met a few times.

"That idea worked on my imagination. Here was Olga going off to revolutionize Russia and probably get hanged or sent to Siberia, and me sitting comfortably in a boulevard café sipping coffee and reading about it.

"That evening Olga and I went out for a walk and I said to her:

" 'Look here, it makes me very uncomfortable to think what may happen to you. There is only one protection that I know of which is really effective, provided, of course, you don't commit murder. That's a *bona fide* American passport. They would never dare either to hang you or even send you to Siberia if you happen to be a genuine American citizen. Let me naturalize you by marrying you.'

"At first she took it as a joke, but I was serious. We talked it over. I told her I wasn't in love with her and if either of us wanted to form permanent relations afterward, it was only a matter of spending a few dollars to get a divorce. So she agreed and we were married before the American Consul.

"That's pretty near all. She went and for over a year I only heard from her once or twice. She used the passport in traveling, but the one time she was arrested she escaped without showing it. That was the Kiev affair.

"Well, then came your exposure of the intrigue between the Cabinet Minister's wife in London and the Russian Embassy; English public opinion took a more decided stand against Russia in the war with Japan and you and I became acquainted and we decided to work together. That finally brought me here, a year ago. And one day I met Olga. She was working in a factory corrupting the political chastity of the factory workers. Since then we have seen each other almost every day. Well——" Avery paused, flushed.

"And you began to understand her better," suggested Savrov, softly.

"Yes; but I haven't pressed myself on her, nor have I tried to hide it."

"How does she accept it?" asked Savrov.

"Frankly, I don't know. I am all muddled up. To bring my own state of emotions to her attention seemed rather like complaining of a headache to a person whose house is afire, she takes the Revolution so seriously. Once, in a general conversation among a roomful of people, the question of marriage came up. Some one said that no true Revolutionist ought ever consider it at all. She protested; she said:

" 'No human being is complete without

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a mate. As for me, if the day ever comes when I can no longer work for our Cause, I shall seek my mate.'

"And she smiled directly at me."

"What a curious situation!" mused the Doctor.

"Curious!" repeated Avery, with a short laugh. "Sometimes it would seem to me like a howling joke, if only the tragic element weren't so obvious. Fancy my confiding to my dear old mother that I am married and her asking, 'Is she of good family?' Jupiter, I don't even know her family name, and I might meet my mother-in-law in the street and not know it. Finally I'd have to admit that all I did know about her was that she was wanted for breaking jail."

Avery paused. The Doctor remained in a deep study.

"AND now," continued Avery, more tensely, "comes this new chain of events. Can you see why I can't believe it of her? All I can——"

Savrov rose suddenly, his brows contracted. He looked quickly at his watch.

"We have thirty-five minutes yet to catch the train. Go and take charge of my baggage. I shall try to make it, but if I don't I shall leave by the night boat for Varna and I shall be in Sofia almost as soon as you."

He took his hat and was gone.

Thirty-five minutes later Avery was seated in a second class carriage in the railway station. Fortunately the train started four minutes late and Savrov climbed into the coach a minute before it started and seated himself beside Avery.

"I was right," he said. "I examined the receipt again. What you told me about seeing Prince Mirsky in Paris three years ago, leaving Olga's lodgings, has given me the lead to an important discovery.

"I examined the receipt again, very carefully. Now I am positive that it was given in acknowledgment of the very draft you helped Olga to cash at your bank. You know, the Continentals have a habit of crossing the shank of a 7. The seven in the receipt is so crossed. Now take a figure 4. By adding a side stroke to the top you make something that looks like a reversed P. A slight erasure on the left side of the figure again changes it to a perfect 7 crossed through the shank. I looked for such an erasure, and sure enough, there it was, so slight that it must have been made with the point of a needle, not visible unless you looked especially for it."

"Well, how does that change the situation?" demanded Avery gloomily, as the Doctor paused.

"Why should the date have been tampered with at all? Obviously, whoever is behind this accusation fears that it could be disproved under the right date. I think I have it—three years ago Prince Mirsky was not connected with the Police Department."

A sudden gleam lighted Avery's eyes.

"What were his connections at that time; do you know?"

"Of course I do," replied Savrov, calmly. "He was military attaché in the Russian Embassy in London."

"That makes it even worse," said Avery. "We all know that especially in that time, every Russian Embassy and Consulate was a Secret Service headquarters. You even exposed the fact that a Cabinet Minister's wife was in their employ."

"And here we come to my point," replied Savrov, quickly. "You remember my exposures. Do you remember that the Chief Secretary of the Embassy disappeared just at that time? Naturally, he had been using me merely as an instrument. I don't deserve the fame that that incident gave me. Well, as I never paid that Secretary a penny for his material, what do you suppose was his motive in making the exposures through me?"

"He must have been in keen sympathy with the Revolution."

"Exactly. Then where would you expect to find him to-day?"

"Working in the Organization, naturally, under an assumed name."

"Of course. And high up in the councils of the party. Even on the Central Committee."

Avery's eyes glowed.

"I see," he cried. "He will probably be present at Olga's trial. And as he knew all the secret business of the Embassy, he could testify that Olga was not in the employ of the Embassy at the time."

"Ah! You are beginning to see a light on the horizon. Now I shall give you a little more information, very confidential. Naturally, I knew the Secretary intimately. I also know where he is now and under

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what name he goes. It is Alexie Ivanovitch, Treasurer of the Committee, in whose Summer cottage in Boyana the trial will be held. But—and here is a fact which leads us a step toward discovering who is really behind the accusation against Olga—not one soul outside the Central Committee knows Alexie's connection with the Embassy three years ago. Therefore, Olga's enemy must be on the Central Committee. Find him, or her, and we have the real spy and Olga is exonerated."

"Great Scott!" cried Avery. "We've got it!"

"No, not quite," said Savrov, soberly. "We have very little—only a light that may guide us somewhere. We can not prove the date has been changed on the receipt. We, and that means you, can help her. She did not even attempt to bring that out when she was accused. It is for you to find out from her why she has kept quiet about it. Meanwhile I am going to try to find out who sent the anonymous letter to Goldman."

CHAPTER IV

A LITTLE FAMILY HISTORY

IN THE evening of the next day Avery and Savrov arrived at Sofia. Savrov had permanent quarters in the Grand Hôtel de Bulgarie; he liked to have his eye on visiting dignitaries, for it was safe to assume that no person of political importance would come to Sofia without a purpose aside from the mere pleasure. His observations were much facilitated by the assistance of the little, fair-haired manager, ex-chief of a Terrorist group whose activities are still remembered in Kiev.

The trial was now only two days away and most of the Committee members had already arrived, including certain exiles of international importance. Of course, they did not put up at the Hôtel de Bulgarie, but lodged with old comrades and sympathizers—themselves political exiles and many of them holding important positions in the Bulgarian Government, the one power in Europe that has never tolerated activity on the part of Russian police agents within its territory.

Savrov met Goldman in the café of the hotel. The Secretary informed him that he had just received a letter from Olga assuring him that she would be in Sofia not later than the day of the trial, she hoped, but if she did not appear, she begged him to use his influence to defer it one or two days later. He showed Savrov the envelope, which was plainly marked with a Moscow cancelation stamp, but what Olga was doing in Moscow Goldman could not even surmise.

On the day after their arrival Savrov and Avery came down to luncheon rather late. Only three tables were still occupied. Savrov led the way to his favorite corner, which was just next to the swinging glass doors leading into the café. Opposite, in the other corner, and also next to the glass doors, two strangers lingered over coffee and brandy. Judging by snatches of their conversation and their appearances, they were Englishmen. One was an elderly, florid gentleman, his short hair and drooping mustache quite white. His companion was much younger; his extremely refined features were rather dark and his face was clean-shaven.

Savrov was facing the glass doors; Avery was opposite him. They had already finished their light luncheon and had ordered coffee when the doors opened, and a man in a long black overcoat and a soft felt hat entered from the café. As Avery faced Savrov, his back almost to the doors, he was conscious only that a figure paused beside him, as if surveying the room. The stranger turned slowly, with the apparent intention of returning to the café. Avery turned his head; his eyes met those of the stranger. In spite of the civilian dress, the changed apparel, the soft hat, Avery recognized Prince Mirsky. For a moment the Prince seemed confused. Then he smiled genially and approached with one hand extended.

"GOOD afternoon, Mr. Avery," he exclaimed. "Of course, I might have expected to meet you in Sofia."

Avery rose and greeted him. He hesitated a moment. Then he began introducing Savrov as Monsieur de Vigny; but the Prince interrupted him laughingly.

"That is unnecessary. I have already had the pleasure of meeting our very troublesome opponent, Dr. Savrov. Shall I ever forget the blowing up he gave us in London!"

"The pleasure is mutual," replied Savrov, rising, "for though I may have very little

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sympathy for your politics, I can feel no bitterness toward one who holds your opinions from conviction. Will you join us at coffee?"

The Prince seemed to hesitate a moment, then seated himself.

"I hope I do not compromise you," he remarked, humorously; "it takes so little to excite the suspicions of your—collaborators."

"I am not a Revolutionist—at least, not by affiliation," replied Savrov. "I am, and shall always remain, a free, unattached individual; but you must admit they have good grounds for their suspicions."

The Prince laughed again.

"My presence here justifies your remark. Yes, I admit the gaiety of the Bulgarian capital would hardly bring me here. But, you know, we are also interested in the Macedonian situation."

"Perhaps; but that belongs to the Department of Foreign Affairs. Yet I should not be entirely displeased if you chose to interest yourself in—our affair. A very dirty intrigue has been hatched against a young woman. She is accused of one of the vilest of acts—treachery to her comrades. I can not believe, if you understood the circumstances, that you would be the man to keep silent when a word from you might save her from destruction, whether physical or moral."

Again came the firm setting of the Prince's mouth; Avery was sure of it now.

"Is she here?" he asked.

"No, not yet; but I believe she will come. I promise you, she will come."

"But how can you be so certain that I know her?"

"Because she visited you two nights ago."

"The deuce!"

Savrov had broken through the Prince's guard. He hastened to press his advantage.

"Not only that," he continued, "but you know that the date on the receipt is false; that the money was given to her by you at a time when you had no connection with the Police Department."

Savrov leaned forward and pierced the Prince with his eyes.

"All I ask of you," he continued, in a very low voice, "is that you tell me why you gave Olga Andreavna five thousand rubles three years ago in Paris."

The Prince had turned distinctly pale. But he retained his self-possession.

"Doctor," he replied, "you are worthy of your reputation. But you will not get one word on that matter from me. I refer you to Olga herself."

"Then," said Savrov, his eyebrows projecting, "I am forced to hold only one conviction; you have hatched this conspiracy to bring calamity to an innocent person for some ends of your own."

The Prince was startled; and yet he seemed puzzled as well.

"No," he said, lowering his voice almost to a whisper. "Dr. Savrov, you have done me the honor to express your belief in the sincerity of my convictions. Then believe what I tell you now. Olga, whom I admit I know, came to me the other night and accused me of exactly the same thing of which you are now accusing me. And I am as puzzled as she or you.

"These are the facts. What my relations were with Olga Andreavna three years ago I can not explain; let her do that, if she chooses. The receipt which she sent me I placed in my private files. Mr. Avery, who evidently recognized her voice the other night through the doors, will remember that a long silence followed. During that silence I was looking through my old files, to find that that old receipt had actually been stolen. Until that moment I did not know it. Now, when you solve this riddle, let me know, for I am as curious as you, and even more ignorant."

There seemed no doubt of his sincerity. He gulped his coffee and rose.

"LET me add this," he continued. "It is as obvious to me as it is to you that Olga has some enemy who wishes to discredit her with her associates. I do not deny that it may be one of our own police agents. If that be so, at least I can assure you he is doing this for private reasons and if you discover his identity, let me know. You can never punish him as effectually as I could and would. Now, gentlemen, good-by. Call on me again when you return to Odessa, Mr. Avery; perhaps by that time I may be able to tell you more than I am at liberty to tell now."

He left the dining room at once. Avery and Savrov sat staring at each other.

"Now I am puzzled," said Avery.

Savrov cast a casual side glance at the two Englishmen opposite.

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"Let us go and have a cognac in the café," he remarked.

They passed through the swinging doors into the café and sat down at a small marble-topped table. There was nobody near them, yet Savrov spoke in a very low voice.

"I, too, am puzzled," he said, "but not by what the Prince has told us. Did you notice? When he began saying more than he had first intended, he lowered his voice to a whisper."

"Naturally. Two strangers sat opposite."

"But they were distinctly Englishmen, and we spoke Russian. Moreover, he said nothing that would have been understood without a previous knowledge of the subject. But that is not all. When he came in, your back was toward him, but I saw everything before he recognized me, which he did before he saw you. First he surveyed the room; then his eyes caught the Englishmen. The old man looked up; neither moved a muscle, but I distinctly caught a flash of mutual recognition. Immediately the old man's eyes turned toward me and Mirsky's eyes followed. Then he recognized me. He was turning to go when you caught him."

"Savrov, I am getting more and more muddled. What relation could there be between Mirsky and two Englishmen? Aren't you allowing your attention to wander off into a possible political mix-up, which has nothing to do with the present affair?"

"All that is possible," admitted Savrov. "Frankly, I am as puzzled as you. But I am going to follow up every possible clue to a solution. If we know why Mirsky is here in Sofia we may be much further advanced than we are now."

Savrov called a waiter.

"Tell the manager I wish to speak to him."

The manager came.

"Tell me, Lubin," whispered Savrov, "who are those two inside there?"

"English tourists, interested in the Macedonian question. The old man, Lord Wellesley, is connected with the London Balkan Committee. The other, I think, is his secretary and has registered as Mr. Hastings. They came from Constantinople yesterday and to-morrow they are going to Bucharest."

"Lubin, I would like to hear them speak French. Can you arrange it?"

"Very well. Move over by the doorway."

Avery and Savrov changed their places. Presently came the sounds of rising voices; Lubin's stumbling French, the more nearly perfect intonation of the two Englishmen. They were discussing train schedules.

Savrov listened intently. In about five minutes the conversation ceased and Lubin returned.

"YES, that was what I wanted," said Savrov. "We are going out now. Meanwhile, have one of the boys keep an eye on them. Did you notice a fair young man having coffee with us? Yes? Keep him in sight, too; and especially watch for any signs of communication between him and the two Englishmen. Come, Avery, let us take a walk."

"Well, how did their French impress you?" asked Savrov, as they left the café entrance.

"They spoke it quite well. It's evident they aren't Frenchmen, though."

"I haven't suspected them of being Frenchmen. But tell me, have you ever heard an Englishman speak French with their accent? Leaving aside those foreigners who speak French with absolutely perfect intonation, you can always distinguish English French. The same is true of the Slav. Those two men are Slavs and, I believe, Russians."

"But the intonation of their English is perfect."

"Quite possible. But remember that the children of the aristocratic Russians learn English sometimes before they learn Russian. From infancy they have the best English nurses and tutors. French is secondary; it is learned in weekly lessons. Do you remember, when first we met, how we had talked together fully two hours and you would not believe that I was not an Englishman?"

"Then you believe these are Mirsky's agents?"

"No, that does not seem to me likely and that is why I am puzzled. They are aristocrats, and a Russian aristocrat despises a spy more than he does a Mohammedan. Moreover, you can nearly always gage a man's rank in the social scale by his face and his mannerisms. That old man is used to command, not to taking commands. Nor could his companion quite hide a deference which Englishmen do not usually pay

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to each other. It was in his voice, in his eyes, in the way in which he passed the dishes. If they were Englishmen only a flunky would act so, and the young man is no flunky."

"Well, suppose that be true. It throws no light on our case."

Savrov made no answer to that. They walked on some distance in silence. Some minutes later they strolled into the public square before the Sobranje, the building in which the National Assembly meets. In the center of a grass plot stood a huge equestrian statue of Alexander II of Russia, known as the "Czar Liberator," a title which has double meaning in Bulgaria, for not only did he emancipate the serfs from their landlord masters, but he also led the Russian armies which freed Bulgaria from Turkish dominion. The massive piece of sculpture had been unveiled lately. Savrov stopped to examine it.

"What a magnificent work!" he exclaimed. "How clear the features are! They say the artist has caught one of the Czar's most characteristic expressions. With all his faults, he was a great man."

Avery made no answer; this digression irritated him. But Savrov remained in contemplative admiration.

"WHAT a peculiar set to the chin!" he continued again.

Suddenly he turned with an abruptness that gave Avery a hopeful thrill.

"In what year was Alexander born?" he asked.

"I am not much up in historical dates," Avery replied, not very graciously. To make it worse, Savrov laughed. They continued their walk. Savrov began leading a more rapid pace.

"I have a question to ask you which may seem more pertinent," he said. "Do you remember the details of that affair in which Prince Stephan Mirsky was killed?"

"Yes; I was in Kiev at the time."

"Do you think Olga was in any way connected with it?"

"Absolutely not. She doesn't belong to the Terrorist wing and she doesn't believe in it. She was in Odessa at the time."

"Was the Prince killed at once?"

"Blown to small bits; he, the coachman and the horses. He passed right under the window and Goldman dropped a bomb the size of a bale of hay."

"What sort of a man was the Prince in appearance?"

"A typical Russian of his kind; bald and bewhiskered. I saw him at a church ceremony once."

They were passing the National Library.

"Let us go in here," suggested Savrov. "I want to look up some data."

At the head of the broad, main staircase in the Sofia Library hangs a great oil portrait of Alexander II. Savrov stopped again.

"You notice," he remarked, "the same peculiar chin, hard-set and stubborn, but here you have the life tints."

Avery experienced a sudden thrill. He had seen that portrait some dozens of times; yet now, for the first time, it fascinated him.

Savrov was detained in the reference room only some minutes. As they emerged into the street again Avery gripped the Doctor's arm and exclaimed:

"I think I see! The Czar's chin—his mouth! It is like—like Mirsky's!"

"But you said he had whiskers?"

"I mean young Mirsky," explained Avery.

"Ah, yes. Of course, it runs through the family. I did not say anything, wondering if you would notice it. However, there is no mystery in that. Do you know the story? I will tell you. You will not find it in the historical records, but it is one of those bits of gossip that even men indulge in. It came to my mind now; I have just been looking up some dates.

"In 1841, just sixty-six years ago, Alexander II (as he was to become) married a German princess, daughter of the Grand Duke of Darmstadt. But two years before that, when he was barely twenty-one, he fell in love with Anna Vasilievna Mirsky, the daughter of one of his father's generals. They secretly contracted a morganatic marriage, but a year later, when Anna Vasilievna gave birth to her first child, she had to confide in her father. The old General hesitated a long time, but finally he felt it his duty to inform the Emperor, and not long after the marriage was annulled.

"As compensation the title of Princess was conferred on Anna Vasilievna and her two sons were raised and educated under royal protection. When they grew up they were given high positions in the Diplomatic Service and on their father's death they returned to Russia, where they continued

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enjoying high but not conspicuous offices. The younger son was the Prince Stephan Mirsky whom Goldman killed; the other, young Mirsky's father, died six or seven years ago."

"But this happened half a century ago," replied Avery. "Does that help us now?"

"It may and it may not," replied Savrov, thoughtfully. "But my instinct to follow up apparently irrelevant information has often proved useful."

CHAPTER V

THE STIGMA OF THE SPY

APPROACHING the hotel, they saw Lubin standing in the main doorway. As he caught sight of them he beckoned and stepped inside into the lobby.

"All your people have gone," he said. "Even before you spoke to me the blond young man had gone, but his portmanteau is still here and he has not yet paid his bill. The two Englishmen went to the station an hour ago. I sent Ivany after them. The young secretary took the Oriental Express which goes to Constantinople, but Ivany noticed that he passed in only a five franc bill to the ticket agent, and received sixty centimes change. As he went second class, that would take him to Drenova, which is a small station in the Rhodope Mountains."

Savrov beamed.

"Good! Good!" he exclaimed. "St. Michael's Monastery, five kilometers up the pass! A nest of Russian priests—exactly the place you would expect an Englishman to go to. And what became of the other Englishman?"

"Ivany followed him back into town and saw him go to No. 52 Rue Alabinska. Old Captain Baumgarten lives there; he is a retired Russian army officer who remained in Bulgaria after the war with Turkey to drill Bulgarian troops."

"Come, Avery, let us go."

They hurried down the street and turned into Rue Alabinska. It was growing dark as they reached No. 52, an old stone house whose tile roof was just visible over the top of a high brick wall. Diagonally opposite, on the corner, was a third-class café. Savrov led the way over to a table on the sidewalk under an awning.

"It isn't a very good place," he said, "but no matter. I expect to see somebody leaving or entering this house. If I do it will considerably enlighten us. I have no idea what it will lead to, but I am convinced we shall soon know why young Mirsky is in Sofia. His being here just as Olga's trial is going to take place may be a mere coincidence; but—well, we shall see."

"But we shall be recognized in this exposed place," protested Avery.

"No matter; they already know us and realize we are not sleeping. Patience."

They waited an hour but nobody appeared. At about eight an empty phaeton drew up at No. 52. A moment later the gate clicked and two men stepped out into the street. One, a bareheaded old man, was evidently Captain Baumgarten. The other was a Russian Orthodox priest, the coils of whose long, gray hair peeped below his black miter, while his long, white beard swept the breast of his somber cassock. They shook hands and the priest stepped leisurely into the phaeton, which swung slowly around and drove up the street.

"There is your London Englishman!" exclaimed Savrov, in a whisper. "Go to the hotel and wait for me there, but send Ivany back to watch for the Prince. He must be in there still."

He rushed off after the priest. Avery saw him engage a phaeton at the next corner, then drive off in the same direction as that which the priest had taken.

AVERY hastened back to the hotel and called for Lubin.

"Have Ivany go back to No. 52 Alabinska and watch for the blond young man. He——"

He paused; the manager's face expressed surprise.

"He dined here," he said, "then went to his room. I am positive he is there now. I shall send up a boy to see."

The boy returned a few minutes later and stated that the Prince was in bed reading. Leaving instructions that he should be called if the Prince reappeared, Avery retired to his room, thoroughly puzzled and somewhat discouraged. Savrov did now seem to be pursuing a shadow. What if Lord Wellesley were a Russian priest down from the Russian monastery, disguised as an Englishman? That might all be possible, but it proved nothing more than a political intrigue. It might even be that young Mirsky had recognized him; naturally

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Mirsky would know him. But it was now obvious that there was no business between them and that Mirsky was in Sofia because of the trial. But why? What would a Russian police chief want?

Avery sat meditating in a chair, the blackest thoughts chasing each other through his brain. In another environment, in America, it would not have seemed so—black. There no stigma attaches itself to the calling of a police detective. But here—it meant spying on the flower of Russian culture—men and women of brilliant minds, whose only crimes were those of protesting against a corrupt autocracy—and betraying them to the hangman. It was impossible to believe that of Olga; and yet——

He got up and paced his room nervously. The minutes dragged. At midnight Savrov had not returned and the boy reported the Prince's room dark. He had sent for Lubin again to make sure Mirsky had not slipped out once more. Finally he lay down on his bed and fell into a fitful doze.

He was awakened suddenly by the opening of a door. He sat up, awake instantly. Savrov had come in through the doorway connecting their two rooms. It was broad daylight.

"I have let you sleep," said Savrov, "while I sat drinking coffee downstairs for two hours. But now Mirsky has just left; he ordered his driver to go to the station. Come, we must follow; we must see where he is going."

"Well, what news?" demanded Avery, as they were driving to the station. Savrov smiled.

"The priest went to Boyana. He entered a cottage next to Alexie's, where the trial is to be held. Down in the village they told us that Captain Baumgarten had rented it three days ago. Except these two, all the other cottages are empty, closed and boarded up for the season. Well, Alexie and I watched for two hours from his window. Then, by the moonlight, we saw the priest come out with a man in peasant dress. They went up the mountain into the forest. Then I returned; Alexie will telephone me later in the day. He followed them."

"What do you make of it?" demanded Avery. "Evidently the priest is Mirsky's spy; they are watching the assembly of the Central Committee."

Savrov's brows were knit.

"Yes," he admitted, "you at least give an obvious explanation. Still, your theory does not fit all the facts. In the first place what can he learn from a neighboring cottage? He can not hear anything. Secondly there will be nothing of importance to hear. No other business will be broached except Olga's case.

"Nor is it a trap; the Bulgarian police would be more likely to arrest him than the members of the Central Committee. In fact, I should only have to make a telephone call and the old fellow would be escorted back to his monastery before night. Frankly, I am really puzzled. But we may learn something now. Let me look at this train schedule——The deuce! No train leaves at this time. What is he doing there?"

THEY passed through the waiting room and out on the station platform. Prince Mirsky was not visible. They climbed into an empty coach on a side track. Here they could observe better and still remain sheltered from observation.

A train rolled in from the north, but Sofia was its terminal stop. They were watching the passengers alighting when Avery uttered an exclamation:

"Olga! She's come!"

Both rushed out, the Prince forgotten. Before they could overtake the slim young woman in sober brown, carrying a small suit case, she had reached the street, at least fifty paces ahead of them. They were hurrying after her when a man, walking slightly after Olga, reached out his arm and touched her shoulder. She turned, then recoiled, as if disagreeably startled, but in an instant she had recovered herself. The two stepped aside and stood conversing on the curb.

"The Prince," remarked Avery.

"Yes, we mustn't interrupt them. Wait."

The conversation was short. They saw Olga suddenly throw the Prince's hand off her arm and leap into an empty phaeton. The Prince attempted to follow her, but she pushed him rudely back and the phaeton drove rapidly up toward the city. The Prince remained standing, motionless, watching. Savrov walked up to him.

"Good morning, your Excellency," he greeted, with just a touch of irony in his voice. Mirsky turned a pale, haggard face.

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For a moment his eyes blazed in anger; then he smiled a painful smile.

"Ah, so you came to meet her too."

The Prince raised a friendly, almost an affectionate hand to Avery's shoulder and smiled in his face.

"After all, my friend," he continued gently, "you are—closely related to her." Avery stiffened under the surprise.

"I shall hereafter be surprised at nothing you may know," he replied bitterly. "Only she could have told you that."

Mirsky's eyes drooped for a moment. He was not a police chief now, but a sensitive young boy. Savrov interposed.

"Come, Mirsky," he said, "I think you are at last in the proper mood. Let us be men and not politicians. We are trying to help Olga, nothing more. Let us——"

"Savrov," interrupted Mirsky, reaching out his hand, "that is also my one object. I put myself into your hands. I can do no more—only save that girl from her own fanaticism."

"We shall. Come, let us take a phaeton."

CHAPTER VI

A LITTLE MORE FAMILY HISTORY

THEY spoke no more until they had reached the hotel and were behind locked doors in Savrov's room. The Prince's face was drawn and pale, as if he had not slept that night. He dropped into the chair to which Savrov beckoned him.

"Gentlemen," he began, "had we not met just now I should have come to you of myself. Now I shall be quite frank with you. Why should I not? As you probably suspect already, the matter is entirely personal to me."

He looked at Avery a moment.

"You will understand, friend Avery," he continued, "why it was no breach of the confidence between you and Olga that I should know of the peculiar relationship between you. She is my only sister.

"Even as a child, Olga was always wilful and strong in her own convictions. Unfortunately they always differed from those held by the rest of the family. Once when our father beat a *moujik* who was slow in getting out of the way of our carriage in the road, Olga said to him, 'You no longer deserve my respect; I shall never again kiss your hand.' And she kept her word.

"At another time she laughed aloud in chapel when the priest called down blessings on the Czar. Again, our father one day found prohibited literature in her room. He gave her a severe beating, but she would never tell where she got it. These are only some of the incidents that grew more numerous as she became older. However, you probably know her character.

"About seven years ago, when Olga was only seventeen, we went to the Podol Province on a visit to our uncle, Prince Stephan. Shortly after our arrival, a local village revolted and the Prince, who was Acting Governor at the time, went out to restore order. An hour after he was gone Olga stole out into the stable, saddled a horse and rode after our uncle to the revolted village. She arrived just in time to see a group of twenty peasants executed in the market place, after having been flogged, at Prince Stephan's command. In full view of the inhabitants and the soldiers she flew up to Prince Stephan and slapped his face.

"This was the climax. Olga was sent home and a week later she disappeared. In spite of all our efforts we could not trace her. To avoid scandal, it was given out that she had entered a nunnery, nor did any one outside the immediate family ever suspect the truth. A year later our father, Prince Andreas, died. I had just been assigned as Military Attaché to the London Embassy, and not long after I received a letter from Olga in Belgium, asking details of our father's death. I went at once to visit her and found her studying in Brussels University.

"Of course, I tried to persuade her to return home, but she refused. However, we continued to correspond occasionally, though she steadily refused to receive any financial aid from me, notwithstanding the fact that her patrimony amounted to about one hundred thousand rubles.

"As soon as she had graduated she came to Paris, and there she came in contact with the Nihilists in the Russian colony. Suddenly she announced that she wished to draw on her income. I went over to see her. We had a stormy interview; she told me she had decided to join the Revolutionists. Unfortunately I had already sent her a draft for five thousand rubles through

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our Consulate in Paris; otherwise I would have refused to advance her a centime. I understood she meant only to give it to the Organization.

"I was now determined to employ any means to bring her to her senses. She had told me she intended going to Russia as a propagandist. I had her watched; my plan was to have her arrested as a minor and brought home by force. But I had underestimated her intelligence. When the French gendarmes called and asked her to accompany them to the Police Bureau, she came willingly enough, but once there she produced an American passport and a marriage license. Investigation proved, to my complete astonishment, that her papers were *bona fide.* I felt how completely she had outwitted me. She had suddenly made herself an American citizen.

"A few days later she disappeared from Paris. My agent lost track of her. In spite of her wild ideas, I loved my sister very dearly and I may truthfully say that my chief motive in asking for the secretaryship under my uncle, Prince Stephan, in Kiev, was the hope that I might watch over Olga. Police work was always distasteful to me, but it was the only way in which I could keep track of her.

"Once, while I was away from my post a few weeks, she was arrested, but before there was any necessity for my intercession she escaped. I have always had a suspicion that my uncle, Prince Stephan, could have guarded against the jail delivery had he wished. But though he never forgave Olga the insult in Podol he had no wish to bring a scandal into the family.

"DURING all this time I never saw Olga once. She steadily refused to have anything to do with me. Imagine, then, my surprise when, three nights ago, she suddenly appeared and accused me of a plot to discredit her among her associates. I think I really convinced her at first that I had nothing to do with it, but her suspicions must have returned and become a conviction before our interview was ended. I had nothing to do with the plot, if there was a plot, but it suddenly occurred to me that the result might still be very good.

"She asked me to send to our home in Moscow for her birth certificate, or to give her some papers proving her identity. I refused. I suddenly wanted the plot to succeed. If she were discredited she would return home of her own accord. When she left I thought she would return in a day or so.

"But instead I received a telegram from my steward in Moscow stating that Olga had appeared there and asked for the papers. By my instructions he refused and kept me informed of her movements. Last night I received a telegram from Bucharest informing me that Olga would arrive here this morning. I believed that now I could at least compromise with her. I have letters which she wrote me from Brussels and I have her birth certificate. All these I offered her if she would at least agree to carry on her work abroad and not in Russia.

" 'Yes,' she said, 'I will agree to remain abroad if you will give me the name of your agent on our Committee.'

"It was absurd. I have no agents on the Committee; I am only a Provincial Chief. And if I did have access to such information, I could not use it for private ends. You saw her answer. Well, let her do as she pleases, but—we must save her from harm."

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Avery, as the Prince concluded, "we can save her now."

He had expected Savrov to be beaming, but the Doctor stood in the center of the room, his hands clasped behind him, his brows contracted, his puzzled eyes fixed on the Prince.

"Olga," he said, "has had a truer instinct than any of us; she realizes that her main object should be, not so much to prove her own innocence as to discover who is behind the plot to discredit her. Perhaps," he continued, thoughtfully, "she realized from the beginning what is only dawning on me now; that the accusation against her is only incidental to some bigger plot against all her comrades on the Committee."

His steel-gray eyes hardened as he watched Mirsky narrowly—like some dangerous animal about to spring, Avery thought. But his words were low and suave as he continued:

"As I see it now, Olga's danger was not from this accusation. She would have had no difficulty in ultimately establishing the facts, though they were complicated by the change of date on the receipt—enough to warrant the necessity of a special meeting

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to consider the case. Some one has wanted, not to compromise Olga, but to call a special meeting of the Central Committee—to get all the members together at one time and in one place. Does that suggest anything to your mind, Mirsky?"

The Prince looked up, obviously puzzled.

"I could understand that," he replied, "if the meeting were on Russian soil. You might then suspect us of having planned a general plan to trap them all. But here in Bulgaria, where law and order are on your side, obviously there could be no wholesale arrest here."

"Where," demanded Savrov, suddenly, "did you get your information that the meeting was to be held here?"

"I have not denied," replied the Prince, coolly, "that I have official sources of information."

"From Lord Wellesley, possibly?"

The Prince gave a violent start and his lips turned white. Yet his answer was uttered calmly.

"YOU are clever, Savrov; very clever. Yes, I admit that Lord Wellesley is one of—my colleagues, connected with the Central Government Secret Service. We met here for a conference. I asked his advice. He is not professionally interested."

"And what was his advice?"

"He did not believe Olga would appear, or, if she did appear, he was quite confident that I would be able to intercept her and persuade her not to attend the meeting. Unfortunately he left the city before I received the telegram."

"He has left the city? Are you positive?"

"Positive. I received a telegram from him in—at a point five hours' travel from here by train."

"Mirsky, do you know where the trial will be held?"

The Prince shook his head.

"In Sofia," he added, "but in what house I do not know and I do not care. My whole object in coming was to intercept Olga."

"Have you ever heard of Boyana?"

Again the Prince shook his head.

"Then I shall tell you," said Savrov. "Boyana is a small group of Summer cottages two hours' drive by phaeton from the city up in the hills. The trial will be held there in one of the cottages."

He paused.

"I can not very well be present," smiled the Prince.

He was recovering from his shock.

"What if I should convince you beyond all doubt," said Savrov, "that your colleague, Lord Wellesley, is now in Boyana, established in a cottage next to the one in which the meeting is to be held?"

Again the Prince turned livid. Slowly his brows contracted and his burning eyes fixed themselves on Savrov. It was fully a minute before he spoke.

"Savrov," he said slowly, "I am willing to stake my official position that you are mistaken. He could not——"

The Prince paused as if silenced by some black, inexpressible thought.

"It can not be," he added, chokingly.

"Ah, I have awakened something in your mind!" cried Savrov. "You see not only who is behind this accusation against Olga, but you see the motive."

The Prince did not answer. He was staring with blazing eyes at the blank wall.

"Has Olga gone—up there?" he demanded finally, in a hoarse voice.

"No doubt she is there now," replied Savrov.

Mirsky rose and began pacing the floor. He wiped his forehead with his handkerchief.

"Can you communicate with them?" he cried suddenly. "Instantly — by telephone?"

"That reminds me," said Savrov to Avery, sharply. "I should have heard from Alexie by now. I must call him up."

He went to the telephone apparatus over his desk and took down the receiver.

"Boyana, No. 6," he called abruptly.

A tense silence followed. Mirsky stood in the middle of the room, staring, his lips still livid. The silence was prolonged. Finally Savrov rang up the operator again. Another silence followed.

"What?" he almost shouted, suddenly. "Repeat! What?"

He hung up the receiver abruptly.

"The wires are down," he said. "Cut. Mirsky, what does that mean?"

The two stood facing each other. In Mirsky's eyes a wild fear struggled. With one mighty effort he mastered himself.

"Savrov," he said, his voice more calm than his appearance, "I do not know. We must go there together and—find out."

"That Avery and I may add ourselves to

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the victims?" demanded Savrov quickly.

"Bring whom you like with you," replied the Prince. "You have resources here—friends—our political refugees. Is not one of them a sub-prefect? Ask him for gendarmes——"

Savrov rushed to the telephone. He quickly gave a number.

"The Prefecture?" he demanded. "Yes? I want to speak to Ivan Pavlovitch. Yes, call him at once—I am waiting. Avery," he added, turning away from the receiver, "take Mirsky with you and order three horses—saddled—as quickly as possible—and see that you take your Colt automatic. I shall be with you in ten minutes."

CHAPTER VII

DOCTOR SAVROV MAKES DEDUCTIONS

THE two younger men left the room. While Avery bustled about downstairs carrying out Savrov's instructions, the Prince stood in the main doorway, gazing vacantly across the Municipal Square. Presently three saddle horses were brought before the hotel entrance. Savrov was already down.

All three mounted, with Savrov taking the lead. They started down the street at an easy trot. In this way they passed through the heart of the city, through a wide section of prosperous residences and so finally came out on a country road. Before them spread a broad plain, flat and treeless, sweeping slightly upward in the near distance to meet the skirts of wooded hills and mountains. Savrov drew up his horse.

"We must wait here," he said, sweeping the city streets behind them with his eyes. They waited some fifteen minutes in silence. Suddenly along another road, leading out of a city street farther up, appeared a string of mounted men, headed toward them. At first Avery thought them a troop of cavalry, but immediately he recognized the brown, red-faced uniforms of the municipal *gendarmerie.* At the head rode a tall, well built officer. Avery remembered having met him once in Savrov's rooms.

"Ah, Pavel, you are here at last!" Savrov greeted him as he rode up, bringing his twenty-five men to a halt.

"Yes," replied the officer, in pure Russian. "What the deuce has happened to you that you should bother your head with thieving gipsies? However, I am at your orders. Such are my instructions."

"That is all you need know now," replied Savrov briskly. "We must get to Boyana just as fast as Bulgarian horseflesh will take us there."

He swung his horse's head up the road and set off at a smart gallop, managing his mount with an ease and dexterity that reminded Avery of the Doctor's Cossack extraction.

To Avery, a New Englander, the ride seemed to grow more furious each minute. Still, he had ridden before, and occasionally he found time to look up at the galloping figures before and beside him. He saw nothing of Savrov except his back. But beside him rode Prince Mirsky with the easy grace of a trained cavalry officer. On his left rode the hulking Pavel, equally at his ease, his expertness, however, suggesting rather the nomad of the steppe. Once Avery cast a backward glance and caught a momentary glimpse of the string of horsemen trailing after through a cloud of dust, their carbines glittering in the afternoon sunshine—tough, wiry mountaineers, every one of them, better fighters than even the Russian *moujiks.*

Once Avery almost overtook Savrov. The latter turned his head; the grin on his face was almost diabolical. For the moment he seemed more the Cossack chief on a wild raid for plunder than the middle-aged scholar and journalist conducting an investigation.

"To think," he shouted, "that this never entered my mind! I might have suspected—when you are dealing with barbarians!"

In a little over an hour they had crossed the plain and were dashing up the rise toward the lower fringe of timber at the foot of the hills. Suddenly they swerved around a bend in the road and entered a peasant village. Savrov drew up before the village inn and the whole cavalcade came to a halt. Most of the male inhabitants were probably out in the fields, but the innkeeper and a few old men came out. Savrov ordered a glass of plum brandy for each of Pavel's men.

"How far have we still to go?" demanded Avery.

"Another half hour," replied Savrov, nodding up the road, which here began a sharp, winding ascent into the wooded hills.

"But just what is the danger?" demanded

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Avery again. "What can he do in this country?"

Savrov seemed about to answer, but suddenly his attention was distracted. One of the old men in the doorway made a laughing remark.

"DID you hear that old fellow?" remarked Savrov, excitedly. 'They are across the frontier by this time!' The old fellow thinks we are a patrol. That explains. The revolutionary Macedonian bands often pass this way toward the Turkish frontier. The Government pretends to check them and often sends patrols after them—a mere bluff. Often these bands are under the command of Bulgarian army officers on furlough. Evidently a band passed here early last night."

"What does that signify to us?"

"The deuce! Can't you imagine? Some of these guerrilla revolutionists were old-time brigands in Macedonia. They can be hired for gold. Now do you understand the telephone wires being disconnected?"

The ride was quickly continued, up a dark ravine, under huge pines. The country had suddenly become very wild; above them, on all sides, towered gigantic crags and cliffs.

In about half an hour, in the midst of a thick forest, Savrov suddenly reined in and came to a halt. He turned and addressed himself to Avery, the Prince and Pavel.

"We are only a few hundred meters below the cottages," he said. "They stand up there on a small plateau. Pavel, I shall ask you to remain here with your men while we three go up and reconnoiter. If you hear a revolver shot come up on the run."

The three dismounted. Savrov turned and led the way upward through a thick underbrush, Avery and the Prince following at his heels. Since leaving Sofia Mirsky had not uttered a word. His face was set and his brows contracted.

They came abruptly to the edge of a level clearing. A few hundred feet away stood a two-storied cottage, built after the fashion of a Swiss chalet. Beyond it appeared a dozen other similar cottages, some of them half hidden among trees and high bushes. All, except the one before them, were boarded up for the Winter.

"There is an arbor in the garden," said Savrov. "As they are not expecting you, Mirsky, we shall leave you there. Alexie and several of the others are sure to recognize you. I shall call him out and we four can discuss the situation quietly."

All three entered the garden from the back and went into a small latticed Summer house. Savrov and Avery continued up to the house. Alexie Ivanovitch, a tall, gentle-faced, middle-aged man, met them on the front veranda. Through the open doorway came the murmuring conversation of many voices, but Alexie led the way up a narrow stairway to a room on the floor above.

"I don't understand it," he was saying. "My telephone was disconnected, but I knew you would come anyhow." Avery could hear Savrov's sigh of relief.

"And how about—the priest?" demanded Savrov, quickly.

Alexie, who had seated himself on the edge of a cot, shook his head.

"I am puzzled," he replied. "We missed him up in the forest. But he came back early this morning alone and is now in the cottage, opposite there. Savrov, I am inclined to think you have made some mistake. Possibly he is some friend of the owners and came up here to rest——"

"Alexie," replied Savrov sharply, "don't labor under any such delusions."

"Is Olga here?" interrupted Avery.

"Yes; she came early, with my wife. She had telegraphed to Anna that she would come to our house in town, so Anna waited for her. She is resting now, in Anna's room. Poor girl, she needs it—she traveled third class all night."

"Is Goldman here?"

"Yes, he came still earlier. We are all here; eighteen of us—seven women and eleven men."

"We had better not trouble them now," replied Savrov. "All this will have to be worked out among us three—or us four, rather. Come out into the garden, Alexie. I want you to meet an old acquaintance."

THEY went down into the garden to the arbor. Mirsky rose and greeted Alexie with a faint smile. Alexie drew back, astounded. Savrov hastened to explain. Hastily he acquainted Alexie with the salient points of the situation.

"You, Alexie," said Savrov, "believe the gentleman in the cottage opposite is a harmless old priest come here to rest. Mirsky, I suspect, would like to believe that you are

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right. I, on the other hand, am positive that it is a certain gentleman who yesterday was masquerading as an Englishman under the name of Lord Wellesley."

"And who is this Lord Wellesley?" demanded Alexie.

Savrov did not answer. He stood listening, then stepped up on the bench built around the interior of the Summer house and peered over the thick foliage on the outside. Footsteps were heard crunching the gravel of the garden path. Then came a metallic click. The others rose and looked through the foliage in time to see a man open the garden gate, walk out and follow a narrow foot-path to the next cottage. In silence they watched him until he had turned into the shrubbery. Savrov stepped down and turned toward the others. The Prince's face was deadly white, but his eyes burned with a smothered fury.

"Alexie," said Savrov, watching the Prince from the corners of his eyes, "you have just asked me who Lord Wellesley is. A moment ago I did not know. I had a suspicion, but so vague was it that I would not even have presented it to you and Avery. Now I speak with positive assurance. The old priest in the next cottage, who yesterday was masquerading in Sofia as Lord Wellesley, is Prince Stephan Mirsky, Chief of the Central Russian Police!"

Only Mirsky did not utter an exclamation; he gazed out of the doorway with closely knit brows.

"WHAT nonsense are you telling us?" exclaimed Alexie, impatiently. "Have you lost your mind, Savrov, or are you making fun of us? Prince Stephan Mirsky was killed some months ago in Kiev, by our comrade Goldman. Crowds saw it. He was blown to bits."

"Ask his Excellency, Prince Alexander," jeered Savrov. "He should know whether his own uncle is dead or not. Do you remember, Avery, that I told you several days ago that Prince Stephan Mirsky's death had always puzzled me—that I could not understand how such an old fox could be so easily trapped? Well, I was right; he was not trapped. On the contrary, he duped his enemies. He had grown obnoxious to all honest Russians, even to the Reactionaries.

"But the inner circle of the Government, the clique which plans Jewish massacres, did not want to lose him. His crafty brains were too useful to the autocracy. He would remain in power, but it must be behind the scenes. So they get some poor dupe to represent him in public, fixed up with a beard to look like him, and then one of their own police agents murders the dummy. Even the poor coachman was sacrificed—to "holy Russia," I suppose you would say, Mirsky.

"Unfortunately for Prince Stephan, however, he shaved off his beard and exposed the family chin and this, coming together with other circumstances, roused a vague suspicion in my mind. Aside from that, I knew there was a traitor on the Central Committee. Obviously, if the Kiev assassination was a fraud, its perpetrator must be a fraud too. That was Goldman, Secretary of the Central Committee, who was also bringing the charges against Olga. Behind him you see Prince Stephan's hand; through him Stephan brought charges against his own niece, hoping thereby to bring about a general meeting of the Committee.

"Apparently he believed Olga would not appear before the meeting to be tried. But the rest he planned to dispose of forever. Through his agent, Goldman, he arranged that the meeting should be here. My Heaven, can you not see what a diabolically clever scheme it is? Here, in this secluded spot, he would, at one stroke, wipe out the entire brains of the Russian Revolution.

"Alexie, do you understand now why he went up into the forest last night with the man in peasant dress? Thank whatever guides your fate that you lost him, Alexie, for up there he has a hired band of brigands who would have shown you even less mercy than the Russian police. And now, with our own eyes, we see Goldman, his secret agent, going over to him to render a report of the situation. Ah, you recognized him, did you not, Mirsky? Did you assist him in his Kiev assassination?"

"No!" cried Mirsky, hoarsely. "No, the holiest cause could not make me a party to such methods. I did not know the murder was planned; I only thought that the old clerk who impersonated my uncle was away on a secret mission and was killed by genuine Nihilists—that they were as much mistaken as the public. Yet now I can see that you have guessed the truth, Savrov.

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"It was my uncle himself who stole the receipt from my private files; he lived a week in my home in seclusion. It was there that I saw this Goldman, known to us by another name, every night after midnight for the last four or five days. But I did not know he was Secretary of your Committee or that he had done the killing in Kiev. He is my uncle's special confidential agent, and does not render his reports to any one else. I never suspected that he and Goldman were identical. My uncle left Odessa with me; I really thought he was going to the monastery in the Rhodopes."

"Ah, that would have been a secure nest," said Savrov. "He sent his assistant ahead yesterday to prepare. He would have followed to-night, after the—culmination of his plot. I fear it is going to miscarry."

"LET us call up the gendarmes at once!" exclaimed Avery and Alexie together.

"As a last resort we shall produce them," replied Savrov. "For the present there is no danger. They would not attack before evening and even if they did, the sight of a gendarme's uniform would drive them off at once. The first shot would bring Pavel and his men up here. We have averted the big disaster. But if we frightened them off now, Goldman would still remain to breed further trouble in the Committee, and our statement that Prince Stephan was still alive would be laughed at. After all, Alexie, you have only heard me draw some deductions from my own observations. There is not a shred of proof to uphold my story. Naturally, Mirsky must protect himself, nor would his corroboration be of much value to the others. No, we must get a confession from Goldman; he must make a written statement."

"But he is gone!" cried Alexie. "He is—over there."

"Then we, too, must go over there. We are three. However, we can get one or two more. If they do not see the gendarmes they will not be afraid of us. They will know that we can not employ—forcible measures. The old fellow will be a hard one to deal with, but Goldman, I believe, will respond to——"

"Here he comes!" interrupted Avery. "Here comes Goldman!"

"Here is our opportunity!" whispered Savrov. "Alexie, we shall draw back into the shadows. You must get him in here. Mirsky, you have acted as I expected a nobleman of your blood to act, but—you must not let him see you. You must protect yourself."

"It does not matter," replied the Prince, with a curl of his lip. "I shall not hide myself from—such a one. What I am doing now shall be done openly."

CHAPTER VIII

REUNION

AS THE latch of the garden gate clicked again, Alexie stepped into the doorway of the Summer house and beckoned. Goldman's footsteps could be heard approaching over the dried leaves.

"What is it?" he demanded, as he neared the doorway.

"Come inside," said Alexie. "I have something to say to you."

Goldman stepped inside. As he saw Savrov and Avery he smiled. Then his eyes turned and he saw the Prince. His ruddy face went a chalky white.

"Ah, how are you, Goldman?" cried Savrov briskly. "We are anxious to talk over a few preliminary details regarding Olga's trial, you being the prosecuting attorney, ha! ha!—Ah! I see you are acquainted with this gentleman."

"You are mistaken, Dr. Savrov," replied Goldman, with a sudden return of his composure. "I do not know this—stranger. May I ask if he has a right to attend our conferences?"

"Ah, Goldman!" exclaimed Savrov, with a disagreeable laugh. "You would protect the secrecy of the Committee! Very proper, very proper! However, be assured that he is as worthy of your confidence as the—clerical gentleman in the next cottage."

Again the color fled from Goldman's florid face.

"But, Doctor——" he began.

"You treacherous beast!" broke in the Doctor, bringing his face close to Goldman's. "We shall waste no diplomacy on you. There is not a thing we do not know. You will write here and at once a full statement—a confession, in detail. Otherwise Bulgarian wolves shall gnaw the flesh from your bones to-night. Alexie, get some writing materials."

With an agility that his figure belied,

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Goldman made a sudden dash to escape by the open doorway. But with equal quickness Avery's fist shot out and caught the spy under the ear. He staggered, but before he could fall they had propped him up on the bench.

"Go, Alexie, and get ink and paper," repeated Savrov. "I sent Alexie away," continued Savrov, a moment later, "because he is something of a Tolstoyan. He is temperamentally opposed to forcible measures. We three, I believe, are of coarser stuff. Now, Goldman, I shall proceed to employ an argument which your sort can never resist."

When Alexie returned ten minutes later he found Goldman lying exhausted and groaning on the bench, his broad face distorted with pain and flecks of blood about his mouth and shirt front. Mirsky stood like a statue in a corner. On each side of the reclining Secretary stood Avery and Savrov.

"Will you write now?" demanded Savrov pleasantly.

"Yes, yes," gasped the Secretary. "I will make a full statement."

"Good; and any deviation from the truth will bring you into serious trouble."

The paper was laid before him. At first his hand trembled too violently to hold the pen, but finally he began to write. And so half an hour passed while the little Secretary covered page after page. As each page was finished Savrov picked it up and read it. At last he finished.

"Now sign," said Savrov, pointing to the bottom of the last page. Goldman obeyed.

"Avery," continued Savrov, "I shall ask you to go down and call up Pavel and his boys. Let him post them about so they will be plainly seen at a distance, especially from the next cottage."

Avery went, but as he left he heard Savrov saying:

"Now, Goldman, we keep our word. You may now return to your master and explain to him how his very clever plot has gone to pieces at the last moment. You may assure him that we have several dozen husky young men here who would be delighted to meet him after a proper introduction, but we shall defer that ceremony for half an hour, which will no doubt suit his convenience. You may also say from me that he may as well retire to private life in earnest, as I am by no means through with him. That nest of his in the Drenova Monastery shall be thoroughly investigated by the Bulgarian authorities."

AVERY descended the mountainside and delivered his message to the young *gendarmerie* officer, who immediately carried out Savrov's instructions. Avery left them in the garden, ascended the front veranda and went into the house.

An impressive sight met his eyes. The small front room was almost crowded; men and women were seated on chairs, stools and even the window sills, while some stood. In one corner the famous Russian author and political exile, Prince Krotkin, blood relative of the Czar, against whose rule he protested, tall, stately, with bushy brows and deep-set eyes and a long gray beard, leaned slightly forward over a heavy cane, listening intently. Beside him sat Sofie Armfield, whose fifteen years in the Siberian mines and subsequent escape had made her an international figure—a fine-featured, intelligent woman, the deep lines about her mouth eloquent testimonials of her past sufferings.

Further to the front, seated in a low reclining chair, was a little, bent, gray-haired old woman, Maria Chernovska, familiarly known as "Little Mother" by three generations of exiles, a survivor of the earliest propagandist movement, when the agitators among the peasants as yet had contemplated teaching nothing more radical than reading and writing. The others were of a newer generation—some of them still students, others who could not so easily be classified.

All were listening intently, bent forward, oblivious to Avery's entrance. The object of their attention was Alexie, who stood behind a table, just inside the door, reading from the paper in his hand. Behind him sat Savrov, not listening, but studying the faces of the audience.

Avery, however, had not taken in the details; his eyes sought for only one object. And finally they found what they sought—a fair, slender, young woman, seated in the rear of the room, her dark gray eyes fixed on Alexie. But in spite of her intentness her eyes met Avery's; for one brief instant a flash of recognition lighted their depths.

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THE reading ceased. For some minutes there was a breathless silence. Then Prince Krotkin turned and advanced slowly across the room until he stood beside Olga. He took up her hand and held it while he spoke:

"Comrade Olga, I think I speak for all of us present when I say that we none of us expected any other result than your complete exoneration. You have emerged from your ordeal with only added glory to your character."

One by one the others silently arose and came over to greet her. Avery was among the last. She extended her hand to him with a smile.

"It is you and he who should have the credit," she murmured.

She glanced toward the table. Savrov was gone. But a moment later he reappeared. He raised one hand to check the rush toward him and to command silence.

"One moment!" he said. "The drama is not yet over. I come with a message from one of your old enemies, a police official. I have not explained that without his aid we should never have accomplished what we did. I withheld his name, but he assures me that there was no necessity to conceal it. By his action in our behalf he, too, becomes a political exile. Prince Alexander Mirsky asks permission to appear before you with a statement. Alexie will vouch with me for the sincerity of his purpose."

"Let him come; we should welcome all who come to us with sincere intentions," said Prince Krotkin.

Savrov stepped out through the doorway. Avery felt Olga's hand contract with a nervous start within his. Savrov returned almost immediately with the Prince. He was calm and erect, but obviously perturbed by strong emotion.

"I do not know how to address you, except as countrymen," he began, "though I have always considered you as self-expatriated. I am more tolerant now.

"I understand that a full explanation has been made to you. I wish to add that it is all true. It was an abominable conspiracy. I have sometimes felt that we could not always be choice in our methods, that the ends justified the means. But a revulsion has come over me; if our Church and Empire can be upheld only through wholesale murders and black conspiracies, then let the Church and Empire fall and let what will come after. I make this declaration to you as I shall to my superiors in St. Petersburg when I give in my resignation, as I shall at once. I declare to you that I shall renounce all connection with the Russian Government and retire into private life.

"I desire only one thing, which I shall plead for before you all, openly. I ask reconciliation between my sister Olga and myself. She is all that is left to me of our family. I have wronged her; I beg her to forgive me. Openly, before you all, she may greet me as her brother and never again fear that our relationship shall be misunderstood."

EVERYBODY turned slowly toward Olga. This time it was the old "Mother," the white-haired old woman, the matriarch of the Revolution, who arose and approached her. She took her hand and quietly led her toward the Prince. Olga came, apparently with reluctance, but as she neared him she suddenly threw herself impulsively forward and brother and sister embraced. Then they saw him whisper something in her ear. She smiled and nodded.

"Friends," said Olga, addressing the assembly, "I have just found my brother. He desires that I shall announce another relationship which I have also kept secret until now."

Her eyes turned toward Avery. "Everett," she asked, softly, "are you still of the same mind you were when you spoke to me three days ago, when you sent for the Doctor?"

"I have been of that mind for three years," he replied calmly. But his head whirled.

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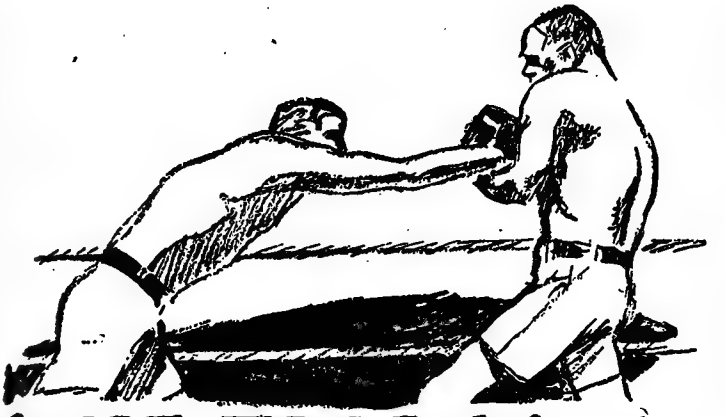

THE FIGHT

by OCTAVUS ROY COHEN

JACK McCRAN, undefeated middleweight champion of the world, rested his scarred face on knotty hands and gazed fixedly at Big Sam Darrell, his manager.

"I want yuh to match me," he repeated. "I've got one good fight left in me, an' besides, I'll never see de day when I can't lick dis Bidwell."

"It ain't that, Jack," expostulated Darrell kindly. "I just can't see the use of risking your reputation for the sake of whipping this kid. He's a good fighter—clever, and has a hard punch. You've everything to lose, an' nothin' to gain."

"What've I got to lose?" questioned McCran evenly.

"You—you might get whipped!"

"Bunk! I kin lick dat guy."

"Maybe——"

"There ain't no 'mebbe' about it. If you don't match me wit' him, I'll git a manager who will."

"You're determined to fight him?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I'll come straight wit' yuh. I need de coin."

"What?" Darrell was surprised and he showed it. "I thought you had a small fortune salted away."

"Nixey. Yuh know—" McCran's voice was very tender—"me mother's been awful sick an' I've had her in de hawspital f'r mont's. Now de doc says she'll have to be operated on——"

"That's tough," Darrell said kindly. "An' you'll risk y'r rep for her; maybe get licked?"

McCran paced the room, hands clasped behind his sinewy back.

"Yes, I'll risk dat f'r her—an' ev'ry-t'ing else I've got in dis woild. She's me only friend—an' I ain't a goin' back on her w'en she needs me most."

"I don't blame you," said Darrell a bit huskily. "I reckon I'd do it meself. The house'll be packed——"

"Jammed," agreed McCran bitterly, "wit' a lot o' buzzards who'll be dere to see de champeen whipped. I'll disappoint 'em, too!"

"I hope so. Yet it's your own fault that you haven't more friends."

" 'Tain't my fault," defended the fighter fiercely, "an' besides, a man can't tell who's friends and who's suckers w'en he's got a pocket full of ready kale. From de day I started fightin' de bunch was against me; an' dey've stayed dat way ever since. Oh, I know yuh say it's me own fault, but it ain't. Yes, I've wanted friends, all right, all right. But dey wouldn't fall f'r me. Ever since I've been in de ring dey've gaddered 'round de ropes like harpies, yellin' ev'ry time de odder guy'd land a stinger. It got me sore, dead sore. W'en I'm a goin' to fight dey come a flockin' 'cause dey know dere's a goin' to be blood! I've never even got a square deal from de papers——"

He paused, embarrassed, and mopped the perspiration from his forehead. Darrell,

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astonished by the display of a sentiment apparently so foreign to the nature of his *protégé*, clumsily fingered a cheap bit of gaudy pottery which stood in the corner of the cozy little living room.

"Have you ever tried—to make friends?" he questioned.

"Tried?" heatedly. "No, I've never tried! What's de use? I'm gruff, an' I'm frank—ain't got no education—I'm just a plain bruiser. Some of dese fresh reporters even say I'm yeller! Me yeller! Wouldn't dat make yuh laugh?"

He twisted his ugly face into a leer.

"Dey ain't never had no one against me who made me show I wasn't. But yuh just wait—dat's one reason I hope Bidwell's as good as dey say he is. Mebbe, some day, dey'll learn I'm sumpin' besides a punchin' machine. But dere ain't no one in de woild but mom who knows me; an' she's a goin' to have de best treatment money kin buy. An' I gotta win—gotta have de money for her. Mebbe I will git licked—I ain't no spring chicken no longer. But s'pose I do? I ain't got a friend to lose—an' I gotta have de money. You draw up de contract. I'll need about six weeks f'r trainin'."

"You're sure you want to do it; sure you want to risk a defeat?"

"I gotta!" snapped McCran. "They ain't no 'want to' about it. I've got one good fight lef' in me—an' I gotta have de kale f'r mom."

Darrell arose resignedly.

"All right," he said. "I ain't no knocker, Jack, as you know; but—well, I reckon you're determined to fight."

"Yep! Sign de papers as soon as yuh can, an' let me know. Remember; not a cent less'n twelve thousand five hundred guarantee; an' a thousand extra f'r trainin' expenses."

They gripped hands.

"I'll do it," said Darrell affectionately. "An' luck to you. Give my regards to your mother, won't you?"

II

"THERE will be ten minutes rest before the main bout."

The deep-chested tones of the burly referee floated faintly back to Jack McCran as he sat, with his seconds and a few inquisitive newspapermen, in his dressing room. He started nervously as the meaning of the dimly heard words impressed itself on his brain, and involuntarily crossed one hand over the other and minutely inspected the tapes with which both were wound.

Darrell glanced at him affectionately. "Feelin' all right?"

McCran grunted. "Sure!"

A young sporting reporter edged closer.

"What are you going to do if you're licked?" he questioned undiplomatically. "Are you going to retire from the ring if Bidwell slips you the sleep-punch?"

The fighter turned toward his inquisitor, snarling.

"Whatcha handin' out?" he sneered. "Y're a nice guy to be in a feller's dressin' room jus' before he steps into de ring. Better beat it before yuh get kicked out."

The reporter sidled carefully to the door.

"Bidwell's got your number," he vouchsafed as a parting shot; "you're a has-been already," and he fled precipitately as Big Sam started angrily after him.

The big trainer patted his *protégé* encouragingly.

"Don't mind that kid," he urged. "None of these guys knows how good you are. You've got this scrap won a'ready."

McCran nodded dully.

"I feel dopey," he said; whereat the newspapermen made mental note—to be used in case the title changed hands that night, for it is a mighty poor championship fight that doesn't have its dope story attached.

"Training's hurt him," volunteered Darrow of the *Sun*, nudging a neighbor.

The other nodded comprehendingly.

"He's as good as licked already."

Darrell swung around angrily. He was worried and he showed it.

"You fellers cut that line of guff," he commanded. "We don't want no Job's comforters in this dressin' room. If you can't talk pleasant, git!"

McCran's beady eyes were turned furiously on his tormentors.

"Youse guys is like a lot of vultures," he snapped. "Y' always comes aroun' tellin' w'at's goin' to happen to de champeen; an' den w'en he wins yuh says, 'I told yuh so.' Liars, ev'ry one of yuh!"

The reporters grinned cheerfully. They were used to that manner of language—it had been McCran's style since he had started fighting, and it had made of him the most unpopular champion in two decades. They treasured it for use.

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But the minutes were passing, and already from the seemingly distant arena the murmur of the impatient patrons could be heard. Dan Smiley, the referee, stuck his head in the dressing room door.

"Get busy!" he ordered. "Be in the ring in two minutes. Bidwell's climbin' in now."

Even as he spoke a roar of applause drifted back from the brilliantly lighted hall.

Jack McCran rose slowly to his feet. Sleepily he pulled off his coat and slipped an old brown bathrobe over his sweater and trousers. Subconsciously he scraped his feet in the small box of powdered resin his seconds had supplied. But the action meant nothing to him. Darrell took him by the arm, his good-natured face wrinkled with lines of care and worry.

"Come on, kid!" he urged. "And brace up. Don'tcha let this crowd see you lookin' thataway. You're in Dutch enough as it is. What do you want to look like a funeral for? You've got twenty-five rounds of the toughest fightin' you ever did in your life right before you; an' if you don't take a brace you'll never last it."

The fighter turned slowly.

"You're like all de rest," he said shortly. "Yuh'll have me whipped before I step into de ring."

"You're nutty," was the cheerful response. "You'll win. I just want you to look good. Remember, you're champ."

Slowly they walked down the hallway, then into another dressing room, and past long lines of lockers—gymnasium closets where the fighters training there kept their paraphernalia. McCran still moved in a sleepy manner when he stepped, with his interested and self-important retinue, into the glare of the bunch-lights over the ring—those hundreds of lights which had so often glared on scenes of battle between perfectly trained fighters.

THE crowd rose to its feet as a man and cheered wildly as it caught sight of the title holder. Cries of encouragement rang from all parts of the house; expressions of endearment from those who had followed the fighter's career from the days when he fought preliminaries for five dollars a bout. Yet McCran heard only one sentence distinctly, and that sentence burned its way into his dulled brain.

"He's licked already!" one man in the gallery had yelled, and there were hundreds in the audience who shared his opinion.

McCran climbed into the ring and started toward his opponent's corner. But Bidwell leaped to his feet, and, with a pleasant smile lighting his handsome features—the same smile which had earned him the *sobriquet* of "Smiling Dick"—advanced with his bandaged hands extended. As they stood, shoulder to shoulder, shaking hands cordially, and critically inspecting the bandages, the contrast brought an involuntary murmur from the audience.

McCran, short, stocky, broad, muscle revealed in every line, was a picture of the brute. His years of ring experience had left on him an indelible mark. His nose was flattened, both ears were "tin"—had been knocked out of all form—one eye was scarcely visible, the flesh being swollen after a long seige of rigorous training in which one of his sparring partners had been over-zealous. His body was hairy and apish, his arms unusually long, his legs stringily muscled and hard.

Bidwell, on the other hand, was only twenty years old and looked like a boy. The ring had left few marks on him. His body was hairless, his pink skin glowed clearly from the effects of the training through which he had just come. His muscles were sinewy and snake-like, writhing like live things under the satiny flesh on which there was scarcely a blemish. His long silky hair contrasted vividly with the kinky locks of the other man, the stubbiness of which had been accentuated by a recent visit to the barber. Bidwell was the challenger — McCran the defender. McCran relied on experience and hitting power, Bidwell on youth and stamina—and skill.

They stepped back to their corners, Bidwell treading as if on air and choked with nervous energy; McCran walking heavily, his heels hitting the padded floor with each step. The four new gloves were tossed into the center of the ring, and Darrell and Jenkins—who was Bidwell's chief handler—selected the gloves for their men. Then Jenkins, a handler famous from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Gulf to the Canadian border, superintended the putting on of McCran's gloves, while Darrell supervised that operation in Bidwell's corner, each watching to see that none of the tricks through the prize ring which had long been in disrepute were tried.

The gloves slipped easily on the small,

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hard hands of the challenger, but McCran's large fists had to be coaxed into the gloves. Distorted knuckles, mute evidence to the power of his blows in bygone battles, had increased the size of those hands and had impaired their strength but little.

Bidwell smiled and bowed to several friends around the ringside, and shook hands with one or two of the newspapermen. McCran looked straight to the front, showing no interest in the event and appearing as if in a state of coma. He snarled at several questioners from the press, who had asked for a statement.

Clear and sharp, the gong struck, and instantly a hush fell over the gathering. The men stepped to the center of the ring for their final instructions, and with them walked their seconds. The referee met them. Perhaps three minutes were lost as they posed for a few flash-lights, and to the side the several moving picture men more carefully adjusted their machines. All around the ring, where sat the newspapermen and telegraph operators, there was a tenseness unusual even in a championship fight, for the common opinion was that in that ring, within the next two hours, a world's title was to change hands.

III

IN THE private room of a large hospital less than a mile away from the ring lay a little old lady; white-haired, sweet of face, racked by a constant, dull pain. On one side of her bed sat a white-capped nurse, and near her was a ticker-tape, which, with its grinding clatter, unwound slowly. Jack McCran's mother prayed softly; prayed for her son. The little wheel inside the glass case revolved swiftly and clicked a message. The nurse looked curiously at the tape and read aloud:

"Ten-eight. Fighters receive final instructions. Betting favors Bidwell with odds five to four."

"They're going to start," quavered the little mother. "God be with my boy. He's doing this for me."

THE confab in the center of the ring was short. Dan Smiley knew his business and he didn't keep the house waiting too long for the battle. He instructed the fighters as to their actions when in the clinches, and ordered them to break at his command. Darrell acted as spokesman for McCran, as he had done for many years, ever since before the day when young Jack had stood over the prostrate body of the former world's champion—a new pugilistic hero.

Slowly the men walked back to their corners. Darrell slapped McCran's shoulder.

"Don't take no chances," he warned. "That Bidwell is a clever lad, and he packs an awful wallop. This scrap is slated for twenty-five rounds. You can afford to wait five or six to see what he has."

The seconds and assistants climbed through the ropes and took the corner seats at the ringside, the fighters' chairs near them, ready to be shoved into the corners as soon as the gong sounded for the end of the round. Near each corner stood the water and ammonia bottles, the sponges, towels and other conventional appurtenances. Bidwell, smiling, leaned on the ropes in the corner, still nodding to his friends in the audience. McCran faced the opposite corner, scowling, and grasped the upper rope with both hands, working his fingers more carefully into the gloves and shuffling his feet over the resin-covered floor.

For the first time he sensed the importance of the fight immediately before him. He realized that the crowd was there to see him lose, and grimly he determined to surprise them, as he had done so many times. He looked over the sea of morbidly curious faces turned toward him; the thousands of people who were wondering just how his brutish face would look in the course of the next hour when Bidwell should have had opportunity to get in some of his punches.

Yet, in all that maze of unfriendliness, the pariah fighter saw the vision of the little gray-haired mother, lying on her sick-bed. The essence of her prayer must have reached him, for his jaw hardened and his shoulders went back a bit.

But in all that crowd McCran could not see a real friend. Many there were who shouted his name encouragingly, but they, for the most part, were men who had bet on him, taking advantage of the fact that the odds somewhat favored the challenger. But their faith was shaken when they viewed the apathetic poise of the title holder. Dimly McCran heard the announcement of the referee:

"The next bout, gentlemen," shouted Smiley to the hushed house, "will be a

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twenty - five - round fight between Jack McCran, middleweight champion of the world—" here he motioned toward the unconcerned form of the stocky bruiser, and the audience yelled its approval—"and Smiling Dick Bidwell," and the house roared as he designated the youth in the other corner.

"These men," he continued, "have agreed to fight to a decision, fighting straight Marquis of Queensbury rules, protecting themselves at all times. This battle will be for the middleweight championship of the world. The men weighed in at under one hundred and fifty-eight at six o'clock."

He turned toward the timekeeper.

"All right, Mr. Timekeeper," he said, and the fight was on.

BIDWELL slipped easily from his corner and stepped eagerly to the center of the ring. McCran advanced more slowly, hands at his sides. Across the outstretched arms of the referee they touched gloves. Dan Smiley stepped back, and they faced each other, eyes gazing into eyes, muscles tensed and dancing.

McCran dropped automatically into his famous fighting pose; crouched well over to protect his stomach, arms almost parallel, elbows crooked over the solar plexus, gloves partly opened, covering his jaw on each side. His pose constituted a perfect defense, and enabled him to strike from any angle.

Bidwell scarcely crouched, and his superior height was accentuated. His right arm was drawn well back, the elbow crooked at a sharp angle, the half closed glove just back of the stomach nerve center. His left shoulder was slightly hunched, partially covering the vulnerable point on the left side of the point of the jaw where McCran had so often landed with deadly effect. His left arm dropped easily downward to the elbow and then rose slightly again, ready for defense or the quick jabbing which is so disconcerting to a less clever opponent. His eyes sparkled and he grinned boyishly and confidently at his opponent.

Jumping as lightly as a cat, Bidwell stepped in, and the gloves of the fighters touched for the first time since the clang of the gong. McCran, his pig-like eyes fixed steadily on those of the boy in front of him, walked slowly in, his feet never leaving the floor, but shuffling, with a grating, scraping sound over the canvas.

Suddenly Bidwell paused in his dancing retreat. He stepped in. Quick as a flash of light his left straightened out and landed with a sharp spank on McCran's eye. Jack's terrible right whizzed at the same instant, but a mite too late. Bidwell was already out of range. The house cheered nervously. McCran shook his head exasperatedly, and walked in again.

Once again Bidwell jabbed with his left, and instead of jumping out of range immediately he shot a vicious right hook to McCran's body and stepped quickly into a clinch, the swishing counter of the champion passing harmlessly behind his back. McCran squirmed and his right arm flew up again with the speed of a thunderbolt, but the blow landed on a glove and did no damage. The younger man coolly worked his arms down over those of his adversary and leaped back, planting a light left on McCran's mouth as he did so.

Darrell's voice reached the fighters.

"Don't mind those love-taps," he called. "That left of his ain't nothin'. Keep cool!"

Without turning, McCran nodded. He watched his opportunity. Bidwell stepped close and McCran met him half way. Like two sparks of lightning, the right and left arms of the champion circled and each landed flush on the youngster's jaw. Bidwell's head snapped sharply back, but, grinning, he danced to temporary safety. He had learned a valuable lesson. McCran was even faster than he had suspected.

In and out danced Bidwell, occasionally landing a light blow on his slower opponent. Twice more in that round McCran landed, but neither blow was effective. Just before the gong sounded Bidwell's glove padded hard on McCran's eye—Jenkins had told him that it would be easy to close—but the champion tossed his head like a bull, and kept coming.

There was something disconcerting about his slow, dogged manner of hounding a man around the ring, eyes glittering evilly, arms and hands almost stationary, yet like live things when in close. The audience knew the danger of the champion's punch, and waited, breathless.

THE gong sounded. There was an audible indrawing of breath as the men dropped into their chairs at opposite corners of the ring. The telegraph instruments at the ringside started their

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clacking, the moving picture operators stopped their machines and mopped their brows and the sport writers nodded to each other in a puzzled manner.

"He's mighty fast," confided Gowen of the *Mirror* to one of the operators, "but if he can keep away from McCran's right for twenty-four more rounds then I'm a liar!"

The other grunted.

"It won't go twenty-five rounds," he asserted positively. "And McCran won't be the winner, either. He's overtrained, and you can see for yourself that he's nervous as a race horse."

The gong clanged once more. Almost before McCran had settled, Bidwell stepped in close and planted a straight left, a hard right hook to the body and then another left to the face, getting away without a return. The face of the champion flushed a dark red. He was unused to such treatment. The audience rose to its feet as a man, and howled approval.

Encouraged, Bidwell again stepped in, shifting and letting fly with his right. But McCran sidestepped cleverly and hooked a hard left to the wind when they got to close quarters and, for the first time in the fight, the champion seemed to awaken.

Feeling certain that his pile-driving blow had weakened the younger man, he followed like a cat; arms working like pistons, poised to hit from any angle, his beautiful shoulder muscles writhing. The audience yelled excitedly, and Bidwell backed cautiously away. He was forced into a corner, and McCran stepped in like a tiger and landed another terrific jolt on his body.

Jenkins, in Bidwell's corner, leaped to his feet. "Clinch!" he yelled. "Clinch, you! Clinch!"

Bidwell attempted to follow his advice, but McCran was there first and his left crashed to the jaw of the light-haired boy. Bidwell turned sharply on his heel and ducked a hard right hook for the jaw. He stepped to one side and danced away, smiling gamely. Men all over the house were on their feet yelling.

McCran started after his man, determined to follow his advantage, and once again the voice of Big Sam floated out to him above the roaring of the spectators.

"Easy there, Jack!" the calm voice was saying. "You haven't got him yet. Wait a round or two, and look out for his right."

He stepped in, but Bidwell clinched without taking any punishment. In the breakaway each landed a light blow; harmless taps which served no end. For the rest of the round it was a succession of jabs. Bidwell's left worked like a machine flashing out like a streak and back as quickly. McCran kept boring in, taking a punch for the sake of landing one, but he seemed unable to find the light-footed man before him, and did little damage.

The gong rang, and the men trotted easily to their corners. The reporters for the larger morning dailies conferred.

"McCRAN'S round," was the verdict sent out over the ticker, and the little gray-haired mother, lying in the spotless white room of the big hospital, read the message of the writhing tape and breathed a fervent "Thank God!"

THE third round was a repetition of the second, except that the fighting was at closer range. Once, in a mix-up in Bidwell's corner, McCran sent a hard uppercut to Dick's jaw, and the smile vanished for a moment from the young face. It reappeared soon, however, and Bidwell kept well out of the way of the champion for the rest of the three-minute session of fighting.

Realizing that the fight was to go several more rounds, the crowd had settled back in its seats with the apathetic attention common to fight-goers in the early rounds of a long battle. Eyes glistened, and the man-blood pumped strongly through their veins. They missed not a move of the trained generals in the ring, but that they expected nothing to happen for some time was evident by their attitude.

Both men were fresh as they trotted from their corners at the commencement of the fourth round; Bidwell walking three quarters of the way to his opponent's corner. McCran straightened up a trifle, his left arm stealthily extended, and his right drawn slightly back. Bidwell scented a ruse and leaped out of the danger zone, with McCran following like a Nemesis.

McCran's temper rose. He did not like this quality of foreseeing his every move.

"Stand up an' fight like a man," he growled; and even as he did, Bidwell leaped in and planted two swift left jabs on his face.

"How's that?" he smiled as he jumped away just in time to avoid a right hook.

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The audience howled its approval. Bidwell stepped in to jab again, and McCran quickly threw his right glove over his face, but he had guessed poorly. Bidwell's right came streaking over at short range, and McCran's head snapped back like a whip. For once, he was too surprised to attempt a counter. He had been clearly outgeneraled.

The spectators had been aroused from their apathy. They fully realized that Bidwell was a phenomenally clever boxer, and they also knew that his blows, easily and beautifully delivered, were hurting the champion. Their brute instincts aroused, the primeval man on the surface, they arose and howled for more action; for harder blows—for blood. Lawyer and laborer, magnate and miner, stood shoulder to shoulder and screamed frantic, jargoned, unintelligible advice to the fighters.

McCran's forehead had furrowed narrowly; Smiling Dick was proving himself worthy his name. The champion came in slowly and earnestly. Once more Bidwell shot home a left and a right. McCran advanced quickly and sent a hard one to Bidwell's jaw, but, instead of backing, the light-haired lad stood toe to toe and for a few seconds slugged heavily with McCran.

The older man had the better of the mix-up, but when they backed slowly away from each other, warily glaring after a short clinch, a thin stream of blood was trickling from McCran's eye.

He knew that he had worsted Bidwell in their mix-up, he knew that he was better at in-fighting than his opponent, but the audience saw only the blood, and it yelled for the challenger. McCran's face hardened again, and the blood from his eye coursed down the furrows which years of bitterness had formed. It had always been this way. Every crowd stood ready to welcome defeat for McCran; none loved him. McCran heard the cheers for Bidwell, and his bitterness against the world surged through him. He started his awful, onward march, stomach and jaw covered, impelled by that awful instinct which cries for *blood.* The world gave him no friendship. Primitive man that he was, he would wring from it admiration and respect!

McCran worked his man inexorably into a corner. But time and again, when he was on the verge of success, Bidwell sidestepped cleverly and danced away to safety, looking anxiously at Jenkins, who signaled frantically for a stall. But McCran was a veteran at the game and the round was young. He cornered Bidwell. Then, with a bestial smile on his battered face, the face from which the blood was now running in a small rivulet, he stepped into a clinch.

Surprised that no in-fighting should have been attempted, Bidwell leaned heavily on his man, and worked his arms down to McCran's gloves. The champion was leaning slightly over his opponent, right hand over Bidwell's left arm, every muscle in his body limp and listless.

Suddenly he stiffened. His right hand clenched tightly; his arm moved like the stroke of a cornered rattler. Downward it curved in a blurred, yellow arc, scarcely visible to even the ringsiders. Bidwell, realizing his danger, in his frantic haste forgot that he was in a corner, and started to jump backward. The ropes prevented, and hurled him into the blow.

It landed with a sickening impact. Striking the young fighter in the stomach, it sank in until it seemed that it must bore a hole in his young body. Smiling Dick stiffened for an instant, and then his body commenced to relax. The audience understood, and an ominous and spasmodic intaking of breath could be heard throughout the house; a stertorous sigh, followed by the breaking loose of pandemonium.

"Finish him, Jack!" they begged—and McCran's friend-yearning soul responded to even that involuntary tribute. "Knock 'im out! You've got 'im!"

Outside the ropes, at McCran's corner, Darrell leaped to his feet, his deep, resonant voice floating to his man above the roar of the house.

"Now's y'r chance, Jack," he called quietly. "There's almost a minute left in this round."

McCran stepped back in an instant and, automatically, Bidwell's gloves flew to his jaw, that point where the finishing blow must land. His elbows were pulled in until they covered the quivering muscles of his stomach. He bent almost double, and his face looked as if he were suffering the agonies of the damned.

Jenkins shouted but one command.

"*Cover up!*" he screamed, and his *protégé* obeyed.

McCran drew back his terrible right hand. His eyes glittered, and his left foot padded the floor alertly, waiting, watching.

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Bidwell moved slightly, and tried to peer through his crossed arms. McCran's right shot over. It struck Bidwell's glove, and the impact sent Bidwell sprawling.

Dan Smiley leaped forward, shoving McCran back with his right arm. Slowly he counted.

Bidwell was a ring general and took advantage of the full count. At the word "Eight," refreshed by his stay on the mat, he rose shakily to his feet and McCran leaped in savagely, arms swinging, but Bidwell clinched with the desperation of despair. McCran cursed aloud in his desire and fierce anger.

He exerted every ounce of his strength to throw off the almost unconscious fighter, and the blood from his injured eye streamed over the pink skin of Bidwell's back. McCran's murmurings could be heard at the ringside above the roar of the crowd.

"Gad! That man is a devil!" one of the newspapermen observed breathlessly.

IN THE hospital, the little wheel in the ticker whirred and clattered, and the tape unwound slowly.

"What is it now?" asked the little mother.

The white-capped nurse held the tape in the palm of her hand and read:

"*Fierce mix-up in neutral corner. McCran lands hard right to jaw and Bidwell goes down. Takes count of eight. McCran trying hard for knockout and crowd is wild. McCran shoots right to the jaw and left to body, but Bidwell covers. Bidwell very groggy and practically out.*"

The eyes of the little woman in the bed lighted.

"They don't understand my boy," she explained gently. "He's doing this for me, you know. I'm sure he'll win."

The nurse nodded. She wiped tear-traces from her eyes. She was very young.

IV

THE spectators in the arena were in a turmoil, mingling ear-splitting shrieks, deep-voiced howls of blood-lust, screams of advice. Each second that McCran failed to land the knockout punch was proving fatal to his chances, for Bidwell's breath was beginning to come more regularly, and his body became less plastic in the hands of the seemingly victorious fighter. McCran shook him loose again by a Herculean effort, and shot a fusillade of rights and lefts to the face and body from short range. But few of the blows landed, and Bidwell stood up under the storm like an iron man. Men in the audience grew hysterical, and the fighters a trifle wild.

As the gong sounded Bidwell made a game attempt to hit McCran, landing a puny little tap on his face. The husky champion snarled at the game lad.

"I'll finish yuh next round!" he sneered.

But he didn't. Bidwell, stronger after his minute of rest and, fighting strictly according to the expert advice of Jenkins, clinched repeatedly and danced out of danger throughout the round, refusing to hit or be hit. McCran's bull-like rushes met nothing but empty air. Bidwell was a somewhat tired fantom.

McCran, infuriated, cursed vilely, and once he cornered Bidwell, but the younger man hooked a hard right uppercut to McCran's chin and got safely away. The gameness of the fellow brought the crowd to his colors as a man, and they begged him to keep out of danger for a round or two.

"*Even round!*" was the verdict of the ticker tapes all over the country; and the eager watchers in the saloons, and the woman in the hospital, wondered. The spectators were breathing more easily. At the ringside even money was wagered, whereas before the odds had favored Bidwell.

When Smiling Dick met McCran in the center of the ring at the beginning of the sixth round he had regained his confidence and his wind. Once more he started the tactics by which he had met with such signal success at the commencement of the battle. His left worked like a piston, and he shot it home to McCran's face time after time with telling effect.

Occasionally the champion landed, but Bidwell's cover was good and the blows did little damage. His nose bled slightly after McCran had jabbed him rather heavily, but he smilingly wiped the blood away with his right hand, as he circled, cat-like, around the slowly moving title holder.

Time and again Bidwell leaped in swiftly from a distance and almost every time his straight left jab landed. He had profited by his experience of the fourth round, and seldom came close enough to give the other's right a chance to get into play.

The old cut over McCran's eye was enlarged and it bled profusely. His flattened

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nose grew red, and the blood streamed from it in a small cataract. Before two minutes of fighting in the round had been finished, McCran's face looked like a piece of raw beef. And the odds had risen in favor of Bidwell.

The seventh round was even. McCran had shifted his fighting position slightly, and battled more openly, while Bidwell, knowing that the deadly right could not do its worst from that posture, was inveigled into mixing it. But, after having his head snapped back by pile-driving rights, he contented himself with the jabbing tactics, using his right hand almost entirely for defensive purposes—the right hand which was reputed to be almost as wicked as that which had brought to McCran the title of middleweight champion of the world.

McCran landed only one effective blow in the eighth round. Bidwell's footwork was brilliant, and his gloves seemed to fly from all directions. He was in and out as if on wings, and McCran was unable to locate him. The crowd howled for Bidwell, and the popular opinion seemed to be that the younger man would gain the title by virtue of a referee's decision at the end of the twenty-fifth round.

One or two there were in the audience who had watched the work of the blond-haired boy since he had first come into the limelight of public admiration, and they wondered why he refused to bring his right hand into action.

"He'll kill McCran if he ever lands it," was their verdict. But Bidwell did not try.

It was just before the end of the round that McCran, goaded into supreme effort by the gibes of some at the ringside, stepped savagely in, and swung with every ounce of strength, and without a proper opening, for Bidwell's jaw. Bidwell saw the wild swing coming and ducked easily. The blow landed with terrific impact on the top of the other man's head, and Bidwell danced laughingly away.

McCran's arm dropped, and he stepped slowly back, his expression one of uncomprehending bewilderment. He walked in again and once more shot his right hand around. This time it landed on the glove which Bidwell interposed to save his jaw, and one or two near the ring plainly saw McCran wince with pain.

From that moment on he used his left hand exclusively; hooking, jabbing, smashing with the one arm; holding the right rigidly; keeping it close to the body, or bringing it into play for feinting. The bell rang and the operators credited the round to Bidwell's account. McCran walked to his corner, half-dazed with pain.

IN THE hospital room the tape unwound slowly, ominously. The nurse read, and her face clouded. She looked doubtfully at her patient, then gazed at the tape again, unbelievingly. The mother sensed a calamity.

"What is it—*please?*" she asked.

The nurse choked.

"Something wrong—my boy——"

The mother raised herself to her elbow, and reached out shaking, withered fingers to the tape.

"Your son," said the nurse pathetically, "has broken his right arm."

The mother's breast rose and fell twice; great, silent, heart-breaking sobs. Then she turned over in her little white bed and cried gently. . . .

IT WAS true. McCran's arm was broken. In response to his calm statement, which meant the championship, Darrell dropped to his knees and examined the right elbow of the famous fighter. The skin just below the elbow protruded horribly, and when he touched it McCran groaned audibly.

Darrell reached into the water bucket and pulled out a big, wet, dripping sponge.

"You might as well quit," he advised slowly, hopelessly.

McCran turned on him wildly.

"Quit!" he snapped. "I'll lick dis guy if I have to do it wid me feet. If yuh t'row up dat sponge, I'll kill yuh, so help me!"

Knowing the futility of argument, Darrell let his man go back for the ninth round.

At first the spectators did not understand why McCran contented himself with sparring and jabbing, but it did not take them long to realize the situation, and instead of sympathizing they shouted encouragement to the inevitable new champion.

Bidwell, flushed with confidence, was yet wary of a ruse, a trick such as has been tried for decades by fighters, and he took no chances. His lightning-like jabs kept flying home, and he occasionally alternated with stinging, cutting hooks and jolts with his right.

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Although McCran's flesh was hard as a rock, the blows told. The skin separated at several places, and the blood flowed freely for minutes at a time. He presented a pitiable sight, and even his worst enemies were forced to admit that he put up the gamest exhibition they had ever witnessed.

And McCran did not do all the taking of punishment. He landed two or three times; painful, heroic, agonized efforts to mislead his opponent into believing that his right arm was all right. But every time McCran's right landed, no matter how lightly, the champion was forced to bite his lips to keep from crying aloud with the pain.

The tenth and eleventh rounds were repetitions of the ninth. McCran fought doggedly on, walking head foremost into a storm of hard blows, blows which were slowly sapping his vitality, undermining his strength and breaking him down.

His mind ceased to work clearly. He knew only that the world had insinuated that he was a coward who could not stand the gaff, and in a dull way he was supported, stimulated, strengthened by the thought that he must show these people that he was game.

In a subconscious way the Ishmaelite heart of him kept him fighting, fighting, fighting; trying with his very blood and body to snatch from an antagonistic crowd the grudging tribute which was his due. He could not see them plainly; this Roman populace, which, with thumbs down, watched the maimed gladiator struggling gamely on. His left eye was tightly closed, and his right was bleeding slightly and was purplish. It was a forerunner of the inevitable round when he should come from his corner able to see little more than a spectral shadow vaguely flitting about him in the ring, always tantalizingly near, yet always elusively distant.

Bidwell knew his man, and took no chances. The title was as good as won, but he did not for an instant cease his furious attack.

McCran was barely able to stagger to his corner at the end of the eleventh round, and from around the ringside came entreaties to the referee to put a stop to the brutal exhibition. McCran heard, and tried to smile; they were sorry for him—they admired him—they wanted him saved from further mutilation.

SMILEY asked McCran to throw up the sponge—to quit—but was greeted with such a stream of profanity that he knew he would have to let it go on to the end. Darrell did his best in a medical way and hoped that the end of the fight might come before McCran should have been literally beaten to a pulp.

The spectators gave no heed to the beating McCran was taking. To them the one idea was that the King was dead. To each other they nodded wisely and said in hoarse, rasping whispers, "I told you so!"

McCran was too dazed to talk with his seconds or to heed their advice. His lips were puffed and bleeding and every inch of his body was an inch of painful, quivering flesh. He took the rather rough, but kindly, treatment of his seconds between the rounds in a sort of stupor.

In a word, he was almost "out."

As the gong sounded, and McCran rose weakly to his feet, some one in the audience shouted:

"A' right, Dick; make this the last round. McCran's a quitter!"

There came a storm of hisses. Then some one screamed the time-worn "What's the matter with Jack McCran?" and the house roared answer, "He's all right!" And into the heart of the bloody bruiser there came a gladness rarely known to him.

Bidwell danced lightly around the ring, determined to finish the fight as soon as possible. His left landed hard, and the audience, as a man, in-breathed audibly; a long-drawn, tremulous "A-a-a-a-h!" rose involuntarily from the spectators; and thereafter with each blow that uncannily prophetic wail burst from them.

For almost two minutes of the twelfth round, with head down, legs spread far apart, arms covering his stomach and jaws, in so far as he was able to keep them protected, McCran weathered the fusillade. Bidwell circled like a cat, watching for every opening, and letting fly as each presented itself. Finally McCran made one pathetic attempt with his left hand, and at that instant Bidwell's right flashed into the opening, with his full power behind it. It was horrible.

The blow landed flush on the champion's jaw, and his bleeding head snapped back with a crack. His knees wabbled, then sagged, and he slipped slowly to the floor, his eyes glazing. Bidwell looked down at him,

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semi-compassionately, and turned toward his corner.

But he had not counted on McCran's superb vitality and indomitable will-power. The champion rolled over on his stomach, and as the referee counted "Nine," staggered to his feet. The house, appreciating the wonderful fight he was making, begged him to quit, but although he scarcely sensed their plea, he grinned at them in a sickly, derisive manner, and mechanically put up his hands.

Bidwell stepped in again. "For Heaven's sake, quit!" he begged; but McCran only snarled and shuffled in closer, trying bravely to land on the challenger.

Bidwell, sickening of the task before him, determined to have it over with as quickly as possible. He uppercut heavily to the jaw, and McCran dropped again to the mat. His eyes set, his tongue rolled from his mouth, and dimly could he see the waving, tossing sea of faces. He realized that they were shouting acclaim to a new champion, and by a superhuman effort he rolled over on his face and tried to rise.

Subconsciously he heard Dan Smiley say, "Seven." He brought one knee from the ground and looked up piteously, the blood streaming from his repulsive face. Smiley bent closer. He felt that the fight was over.

"Nine!" he said, and then—the gong sounded clearly from the side of the ring! The round was over!

Darrell leaped through the ropes and bore the fallen champion to his corner.

"You can't go on with this!" he grated. "That feller'll finish you in the next round."

But McCran only vaguely heard, and agonizingly raising his right arm motioned that he would continue. He mumbled his words on a thickened tongue coated with blood.

As the men rose for the thirteenth round, and their seconds scurried through the ropes to their choice ringside seats, many in the audience started for the doors and the aisles were blocked as the end was impatiently awaited.

Bidwell, almost as fresh as at the beginning of the first round, danced lightly across the ring almost to McCran's corner.

The crowd clamored for the knockout. McCran snarled to himself—at the world. They should not make a laughing-stock of him. He, he was the champion! This upstart could not knock him out! He was winning friends—was he to lose them by defeat?

McCran never remembered just how the blow landed. Bidwell stepped back and the champion sank limply to the canvas floor, but by instinct he climbed tortuously to his feet at the count of seven, and stood shakily in the center of the ring.

Both eyes were closed and the blood poured from a dozen ugly abrasions. The picture he presented as he stood in the center of the ring was pathetic but withal heroic.

Even the audience, that audience which had hated McCran, loved him now, and they begged Bidwell not to knock him out. The young fighter shook his head.

"I've got to do it," he said in a worried manner to his seconds. "The —— fool won't quit!"

THE little mother in the hospital, her face buried in the pillows, listened to the fateful clicking of the ticker, and suffered as the nurse called each blow.

"*McCran takes the count of nine,*" told the tape. "*McCran refuses to quit. Bidwell swings for the jaw——*" And then the wheel paused in its frantic whirring for several minutes.

IN THE ring, Bidwell walked in close, looking for an opening; such an opening that the blow could not fail to end the fight. Vaguely McCran realized that the end had come and, with a great sob, he buried his head in his crimsoned arms and waited. It was as if he were being guillotined.

Looking down, he saw Bidwell's foot advanced near his, and, with a groan, he spun around as the young fighter stepped in.

Instinctively his right hand—with the broken arm—circled up like a meteor. The blow landed flush on Bidwell's jaw!

Bidwell went down as if he had been shot, a look of unutterable surprise on his unconscious face.

At first the audience could not realize what had happened. Then it broke into an uproar. It was a miracle!

The referee, scarce believing his eyes, stepped in and started counting. McCran's hands dropped to his sides, and he stood in the center of the ring, swaying from side to side, grinning at the audience. They shouted for him—and there was a different timbre in the acclaim from what he had been used to in bygone days. He realized that he was

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happy. Through his numbed brain flashed the thought that his mother would be glad. . . . His head wabbled slightly, and his face twitched with the agony of his arm.

Smiley raised his head.

"Ten!" he said, and his voice was husky. "McCran wins!"

Silence had fallen. The crowd was awed. Smiley stepped forward, and, as a matter of custom, raised McCran's arm—the arm of the victor.

It was the right—the broken arm. McCran's face, bloodied and sinister, twitched horribly. He groaned aloud; swayed, spun on his heels, and fell like a corpse over the body of his opponent.

"McCRAN wins by knockout in thirteenth round," read the nurse.

The little mother beamed.

"I knew he would!" she said; "I prayed for him!"

THE GREEN DEVIL

by

DWIGHT LOGAN LOUGHBOROUGH

JACK SPENCER, the big civilian scout, sauntered into the Alhambra one afternoon and took a seat at a little table at the far end, whence he could watch the numerous river-craft in the Pasig, which flows through the center of Manila.

The place was crowded. On one side of the great room were a score of German sailors from the cruiser *Kaiser Wilhelm*. They were drinking San Miguel beer to the tune of half a dozen German songs sung in as many keys at the same time. One of the party was standing on a table, swinging his stein above his head and shouting at the top of his voice.

Spencer looked his disgust at the "little fat Dutchmen" and ordered a glass of "hop-tea" from the mestizo waiter who came up just then, bowing obsequiously.

"Beg pardon, shur," said some one at his elbow, "may I—hic—trouble you for—hic—shigaret?"

Spencer looked up to see a tall, broad-shouldered Signal Corps sergeant, tottering drunkenly, hiccuping miserably.

The scout tossed the stranger his book of wheat-straws and package of tobacco and sat watching him striving vainly to roll a cigarette. During the attempt the sergeant spilled most of the tobacco and tore into shreds twenty or thirty of the papers.

"Gesh I'll have to get you to—hic—make shigaret for me—old top," the sergeant

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remarked after a while, returning the papers and tobacco to Spencer and dropping into a chair at the scout's table.

Spencer rolled a cigarette and handed it to the Signal Corps man.

"Ain't yuh afraid you'll get bubonic, or something?" he asked. "Me a lickin' your cigarette thataway?"

"Zash all right—hic—old top. I'm much 'bliged. Got a match?"

Spencer struck a match and held it to the end of the cigarette, dangling from the soldier's lips. Just then the Filipino band struck up an old-time popular melody. The sergeant blubbered.

" 'My Old Kentucky Home.' " He repeated the name of the band's selection. "Zash no tune tuh play in a place like this —hic—now is it? I leave it tuh you."

"You from Kentucky?" Spencer asked, studying the sergeant's face.

"Never. Never been—hic—in Kentucky —hic. But I'm an American, I am!"

He struck the table with the palm of his right hand. Spencer noted that the hand was slender. The fingers were long and tapering; the thumb bent easily backward, in a semicircle. There were yellow stains between the first and second fingers. A two-karat diamond gleamed from a heavy setting on the third finger.

"A dip, an artist, a card shark or a profligate," mentally commented Spencer.

Then he looked squarely into the sergeant's face, as if there to confirm his opinion of the man.

It was a handsome face. The dark-gray eyes were those of a man unafraid; fearless, penetrating. The nose was rather long and straight. The mouth bespoke indomitable courage, as did the chin, which was square and lean. The forehead was high and broad, and was surmounted by a wealth of curly auburn hair, sprinkled with gray.

However, the face was that of a man older than his years. About the mouth—a rather self-indulgent mouth it was—Spencer noted, were deep lines. The cheeks were shrunken. And at the corners of the eyes, now bleary and bloodshot, there were crow's feet, which might have been the result of sorrow or dissipation. Probably both, Spencer concluded.

The sergeant was a powerful fellow. He stood easily six feet three inches tall. He weighed at least two hundred pounds and there did not appear to be on all his massive body an ounce of superfluous flesh. But had Spencer felt of the man's muscles he would have found them soft and flabby. He was what the scout would have called "a was-er."

FOR several minutes he sat there, his chin on his broad chest, blubbering, the cigarette hanging on to his lower lip and flapping as he blubbered.

"If you didn't come from Kentucky what the dickens are yuh slobberin' about?" Spencer asked at length.

"Brings back recollections—hic—old top. Recollections. Whash matter you? Can't I feel bad if I wanta? Ain't I American ci'zun? Ain't zhis a free country? Guess I —hic—I can shed all the tears I wanta. Lesh—hic—have a drink. Hey, you *muchacho*, bring us a drink—*muy pronto!*"

He waved a long arm in the direction of a half dozing Tagalog boy leaning against the railing on the balcony overlooking the dirty, surging river flowing along the back end of the Alhambra and lapping sibilantly against the gaunt spilings supporting the building.

"Bring me li'l Bourbon—hic—and th' green bottle. You savvy green bottle? *Pronto!* What'll you have, old top?" he asked the scout.

"I have a drink comin', thank yuh," Spencer replied.

" 'S no difference; have anusher. Have couple more. Do you good."

The Signal Corps sergeant rose, staggering, from his chair and dug down with one long hand into a pocket of his khaki trousers. He extracted a chamois bag filled with twenty-dollar gold pieces. One of these he threw carelessly on the table. The *muchacho* picked it up, grinning.

"I'm a sport, old top. Havin' good time. Lots o' *suelto! Mucho dinero*, eh? 'Nough to buy Sampoloc and San Miguel brewery thrown in. Eh? Losh good times. *Pronto, hombre!*"

This last to the waiter.

"Bring my *amigo* here a shot of—whatever he wants. Open bossle Cliquot. Anyshing. What'll yuh have, old top?"

Spencer shook his head at the waiter, who ambled off to fetch a "li'l Bourbon and the green bottle."

Yes, he understood what Señor Hollingsworth would have. Had he not served Señor Hollingsworth many times before? And had he not seen the *Americàno grande*

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served as many times more right there in the Alhambra—and at the Hotel de Oriente and at the Saddle Rock? Of course he understood.

He wondered why any one should mix that stuff from the green bottle with whisky. Wasn't the whisky bad enough without adding anything to it? Ugh! The *muchacho* congratulated himself he was not an American. For him *muy poco vino* was quite enough.

The sergeant stumbled again into the chair at Spencer's table and dropped his face into the hollow of a brawny arm. The scout heard him sobbing convulsively; his massive frame shook as if he were having a spasm. After a while the soldier raised his head and looked at Spencer out of tear-stained, swollen eyes. He sniveled and blew his nose on a fine linen handkerchief which he took from the pocket of his white silk shirt.

"Zish isn't zhe place to play such shings as zat, is it?" he asked, referring now to another selection being played by the band.

" 'My Maryland!' Lord, old top—hic—zhey ought to be 'rested for playin' zhat!"

"Come from Maryland?"

"No; but I'm American. And it makes me feel li-kell to hear 'em play zat sort o' stuff. Eh? Zhey ought to be given z'water cure."

He wiped his nose again and sat staring out on the river scene below them, sobbing, sniveling.

"Shink I'm dashed idiot, don't yuh? Maybe so. Don't care a continental whoop what yuh shink. Believe you're a pretty good old scout at zhat! Put 'er zhere!"

He held out his hand to Spencer, who took it, and they shook hands. The scout smiled indulgently. He had seen "cryin' jags" before.

"Here's your booze — and mine, sergeant——" he began, as the two waiters approached.

"Hollingsworth, old top. Edward De Forrest Hollingsworth," the other answered promptly. "And you are——"

"Jack Spencer."

"Zhe 'Mysterious Giant'; I've heard of you. All way f'm Iloilo to Tarlac. You're fellow zhat located Pablo Tecson, aren't you? An' drove 'im out so's Major Bell and zhe 'Suicide Club' could take a crack at 'im?"

He was becoming enthusiastic at the recollection. He wiped his eyes with the back of a dirty hand, grinned and poured a liberal quantity of the contents of the green bottle into the good two fingers of whisky the Tagalog boy had brought.

"Reckon I am. But yuh hadn't ought tuh slop that blanked stuff into yer innards. It's pizen."

"Zhis? Ho! Why, man, I live on absinth and whisky."

"You're a heap bigger fool 'an you look, sergeant. Don't yuh *see* things? Don't yuh *feel* things—bugs and sech—a crawlin' under yer skin? No wonder yuh was slobberin' thataway."

He leaned back in his chair and sat looking at the soldier, scrutinizingly, through half closed eyelids.

"Me? Slobberin'? Wait till I dash zhis green devil into me and hear it splash! Slobber? I'll sing. I'll go over zhere and whip a dozen of zhose Dutchmen. I'll clean out zhe dump if you shay so. I'll——"

"Then for the Lord's sake, sergeant, don't dash it into yuh! I came in here for a little quiet spell. I couldn't think of a row. Git enough o' that out on the line."

"All very well, shur!"

The sergeant held his glass aloft. He grinned foolishly and quaffed the liquor at a single gulp. He smacked his lips, grimaced idiotically, set the glass on the table and told the waiter to fill it again.

"It'll be jus' as you shay, old top. Jus' as you shay. We'll hold a prayer meetin' here, 'stead o' fightin', 'f you shay so."

"Anything but a fight! I hate brawls."

"So d' I, old fellow. So d' I. Believe me, I hate 'em. But yuh see, when I get a few shots in the heel I always like t' trim somebody—or get trimmed. Don't make so ver' mush diffrence. Jus' so zhere's some real good trimmin' done."

"So that's the idea? Slobbering, fightin' jags you get, eh?"

Spencer sat looking at the soldier, an elbow on the table, his chin in his palm. His brown eyes looked into the bleary gray ones. And fire flashed.

"Well, you finished your slobberin'," went on the scout after a while, "and now I reckon you want the trimmin' done. I'm —not pa'ticalar about engagin' in any *combate*, as yuh might say, but I reckon, stranger, I'll have to 'commodate yuh—bein' as yuh mus' have the trimmin' done. An' really, yuh see, I ain't strong for havin' our

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gueshs—zhose little fat Dutchmen—get the worst of it. Special, when they comes ashore so peaceable and good-natured-like."

The sergeant drank a second whisky and absinth. Then he drank another. He put the palms of both his hands on the table in front of him and leaned toward the scout. He stuck out his chin. His eyebrows lowered, menacingly.

"I TAKE it you imagine you can —do the trimming; eh? Clean me, maybe?"

He appeared perfectly sober now. Perfectly self-possessed, calm, and deliberate. There was an evil glint in his gray eyes as he flashed:

"Get out of your coat and step out here! It won't take long."

Spencer smiled that slow, easy smile of his. He rose leisurely to his full height. He was perhaps two inches taller than the Signal Corps sergeant. But he did not remove his coat. Instead, he buttoned it from bottom to top, slowly, nonchalantly, and stood with drooping shoulders, smiling.

"No, it won't take so very long, I reckon. Not more 'an about ten seconds to do all the trimmin' you'll want done to-day."

Hollingsworth was on his feet like an infuriated wild beast. One scarcely could have recognized in him the same man who had dropped into the chair at Spencer's table a little while before.

A sudden hush fell over the big, barn-like room. Glasses stopped clinking; ribald laughter ceased; the band stopped playing "My Maryland;" the German sailors, with mouths agape, turned toward the two big Americans, facing one another threateningly, like gladiators about to engage in bloody fray.

"*Madre!*" whispered the head bartender. It was as if he had fired a revolver.

A Tagalog *muchacho* slipped noiselessly through the swinging doors opening on to the Escolta in search of a patrolman—or two. A dozen, even, might come in handy before it all was over. The *muchacho* knew Hollingsworth for a very demon when he had "dashed the green devil into him and had heard it splash."

The Signal Corps sergeant crouched suddenly, his left foot forward, his fists clenched in front of him. He resembled nothing more than a huge gorilla. Lower, lower, he crouched. The scout stood still, his arms akimbo, smiling down at the soldier now approaching him cautiously, as a panther creeps upon its prey, ready for the spring.

Suddenly the soldier's left hand shot out. His fist caught the big scout squarely on the top of his head. Spencer raised his head and laughed. The sergeant sprang back with a howl of rage and pain.

"Anybody's a boob to slug with flippers like your'n," Spencer said quietly. "Yuh'd ought tuh rough-house it. Them hands o' your'n never was made for smashin' things."

The soldier swung his right. The blow came swiftly, surely, unexpectedly. It caught Spencer on the point of his chin. The scout went down with a crash—and lay still. He hadn't had time to duck his head as he did to meet the first attack. The soldier stood over the prostrate form, chuckling insanely, gloating.

Spencer clambered painfully to his feet. The sergeant waited for him to get up. Then he swung again. This time the blow —a terrific right—landed on Spencer's skull. It set him back a yard or so. It seemed fairly to drive his head down in between his shoulders.

But now Hollingsworth stood practically helpless; a small bone in each of his hands had been broken. Spencer looked at him and grinned. Then he rushed for the soldier. He clutched at him with powerful hands; he took him, fighting like a demon, in his arms and crushed him. Back and forth they fought, tipping over tables and chairs, rocking, lunging, breathing heavily, both bleeding profusely, slipping, sliding over the blood-stained floor. The sergeant was cursing hideously.

After a while—it seemed an hour to the onlookers, accustomed even as they were to brawls and bloodshed—the soldier landed on his neck, with Spencer atop of him. A hammerlock had been effective. The scout's powerful hands were about the soldier's throat, choking him slowly into insensibility.

"There!" Spencer muttered, as the soldier lay passive, a great hulk of inert matter, his eyes seeming to be bulging from their sockets. "I reckon that'll hold yuh for a while, you blitherin' idiot. Try your dude fightin' on me, will yuh? Well, that's how we fight in Missoury."

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THE scout stood up just as the provost sergeant came rushing in, all importance, blustering, officious.

"Here you!" he called to Spencer, "come along with me! You fellows grab that poor devil there and carry him outside and send for an ambulance from the First Reserve."

This to half a dozen soldiers who had come trooping in behind him, their bayoneted rifles at a ready.

But Hollingsworth was not carried outside. For a moment he lay moving his head from side to side, gasping. Then he sprang to his feet and stood looking about, nonplussed, bewildered. The provost sergeant laid a hand on Spencer's arm. He held a Colt's forty-five in the other hand ready for an emergency.

"Don't you touch that man!" Hollingsworth shouted. "He's my friend. You understand that, you little shrimp?"

Before any one could anticipate his move, Hollingsworth whipped out a revolver from under his coat and struck the infantry sergeant a stinging blow with the long barrel of it. The sergeant of the provost guard went down like a log.

At the Cuartel de España the next day, after a night spent in the guardhouse, Spencer and Hollingsworth were taken before the Provost Marshal. The latter recognized Spencer and released him with a lecture on the ethics of an American citizen in a strange land teaching Malays how to behave.

It was different with Hollingsworth. He was an enlisted man. He had struck a sergeant of the provost guard. He had interfered with an officer of the guard in the performance of his duty. He had acted in a manner unbecoming a gentleman and a soldier. He had violated nearly every one of the articles of war.

When the General Court Martial was called a month later Spencer was ordered in from the line to testify. The bartender's testimony was impeached, as was that of the Tagalog and mestizo *muchachos* who had seen the affair. The provost sergeant wasn't very clear. It was hard for him to talk before a lot of commissioned officers. The members of the squad who had come in with him couldn't remember. Possibly they had been glad to see the sergeant get the "wallop on the nut." Anyway, a lot of the fellows knew Hollingsworth. He was a decent chap. No use sending him to Alcatraz.

But it was Spencer's testimony that determined the officers of the Court to let the Signal Corps man off with a fifty-dollar "blind."

"We both was drinkin', yuh understand," he had testified. "Finally I gets quarrelsome and takes a wallop at my friend here, Sergeant Hollingsworth, the man you're tryin'. I'm abusin' him shameful, yuh understand, and him a tryin' to get me out'n the place. I grabs him and chokes him somethin' fierce. He loses his nut, yuh understand, and lays there.

"Then in comes this here sergeant from the Twentieth Infantry—this provost sergeant—and collars me. Right enough, I reckon. I'm ca'm as a cucumber now. I starts out—or I'm ready to start out.

"Up jumps Hollingsworth—dazed from the beatin' and crushin' and chokin'—and sees me there. He don't realize the infantryman is on duty. Jus' figgers I'm in for trouble. He's my friend, yuh understand. The infantryman has a gun. Hollingsworth out with his, same as you would, I reckon, and drops 'im.

"Jus' natural-like. They wasn't no hard feelin'; no mean intention. Jus' wanted to protect me. You-all would do the same thing. Surest thing yuh know!"

"I believe you lied, Spencer," said Major Harper, one of the officers of the Court, afterward. "If it had been any one but you we would have 'bobbed' that lush."

The two were fast friends—Major Harper and Jack Spencer. And a strange friendship it was. And yet possibly not so strange after all. The major was a refined, splendidly educated, talented, dashing officer of regular cavalry.

Spencer was a generally uncouth-appearing, almost illiterate "nobody from nowhere," so far as any one in Luzon seemed to know. But he was every inch a man. He had the heart at once of a lion and of a child. He was a relentless bloodhound on the trail of the enemy. He was as tender and gentle as a woman when he had to deal with sick or wounded. He was a friend to everybody. And everybody loved him.

"I'm much obliged, Major," he answered. "I take it as a right smart compliment to have yuh say that. Now, if I did lie, Major, yuh see it was because the boy got all 'at was acomin' to him. He needed a trimmin' that day. But that's all he did need. Yuh understand?"

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II

SPENCER met Hollingsworth several weeks later, sitting on a bench in the plaza across from the Cathedral de Binondo. He was in citizen's clothes—a white duck suit, a natty Panama hat and white canvas shoes. He was clean-shaven, clear-eyed, sober.

"On furlough?" Spencer asked.

"No; enlistment expired. Just got my finals to-day."

"Goin' back to the States?"

"No."

"Goin' to take on again?"

"They won't have me. The old man broke me the day before I was discharged."

"Broke yuh? Yuh mean——"

"Reduced me to the ranks. Discharged me as a second class private."

"Why?"

"Booze. Put it on my discharge under the character heading."

"Was it the booze—or was it——"

"I've heard that before! It don't make any difference whether it was the booze or because I am a weak thing that can't leave the stuff alone. Booze gets you in its nasty tentacles like a slimy devil-fish—and there you are!"

"Where?"

"In torment!"

"Why don't you get out?"

Hollingsworth hunched one of his great shoulders.

"You don't know what you're talking about."

"Maybe not. But if it was me, yuh can bet yer last centavo I'd make a deuce of a fight to get out. Look at yuh! I'll bet your pa and your ma both was thoroughbreds. Eh? I'll bet you're eddicated. You ought to be. Why say, Hollingsworth, I wish I had 'a' trimmed yuh more'n I did! Yuh'd ought——"

The scout paused and looked at the man beside him on the bench.

"Say what you please. But it won't do any good. There isn't help for me. I'm—a goner. Savvy?"

Hollingsworth shrugged his shoulders; then he sighed.

"What's the use? It must have been born in me!"

"Rot! A man can do erry thing he wants to. He can cut the booze and be a man; or he can—stay in torment." Spencer sat whittling a bit of an ebony block with his ever present jack-knife.

"You—don't understand, old top."

"Maybe I don't. Maybe I'm a——"

"Spencer," interrupted Hollingsworth, sitting up straight and clasping his hands tightly in front of him, "there's a fox gnawing at my vitals. Savvy the Spartan lad?"

"Never heerd o' him."

"Well, there's something on my system I must give up. I haven't talked to a soul—about myself—for years. I must tell some one. I—I—believe you're my pal. Will you listen?"

"Sure I'm your pal—even if yuh are a crazy fool. I know yuh ain't no good, but I can forget it. Blaze away." He went on whittling.

"I'm a college man. Managed somehow, in spite of my dissipations, to graduate. Played football for a while, but was fired out of the squad for getting drunk. The Green Devil got me. Savvy the Green Devil?"

"Absinth. Yes, I savvy."

"It got me hard. Suissesses, frappés—you know the route? It *gets* you—absinth. Then you mix it with your booze. Then you go down faster than before. Then the maggots crawl in your brain. You *see* things. You imagine a lot more. Horrible, terrifying things.

"One day I—I—imagined my father had wronged me. I hadn't any mother. She died when I was a little shaver. I—I—struck my father. He was an old man—the best man in the world. I struck him!"

Hollingsworth passed a hand over his eyes. Spencer watched him wipe the tears away with the back of his hand, heard him grinding his teeth.

"I—left him lying there in front of the fireplace in the library and ran madly out of the house. For a week I didn't know what I did—where I went. The Green Devil had me. Then I woke up.

"I thought a few years in the Service might help some. If not, there was the chance that I might be killed. I enlisted in the Signal Corps because I knew telegraphy—had played with it as a kid, and operated the wireless on my yacht after I grew up. I never wrote home. I—I—never heard from my father directly since that day."

"You poor, snivelin' weak sister! Somebody ought tuh take yuh in 'out o' the hot sun and wipe your nosey." Spencer looked

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full at his friend and sneered. After a moment he blazed:

"Why, honest, somebody ought tuh break yer consarned neck. Yuh ain't no good, for sure. Yuh never was no goôd. I don't believe yuh're your pa's and ma's own son. I'll bet they picked yuh out of the garbage bar'l—or somethin'. You—you—miserable, good-for-nothing—dirty, cowardly——"

The scout called him a Tagalog name—a name more vile than any he could think of in English. He held the blade of his jack-knife pressed against the other's breast.

HOLLINGWORTH'S swarthy face went white. His lips turned purple. His eyes flashed. The pupils became mere pin points. His teeth came together with a sharp click. Then a wave of dull red swept over his face and neck. He bit his lower lip until the blood ran in a tiny stream down his chin.

"You—you——" he began.

"Oh, now, just you sit right where yuh are, pard. I've got yer Angora, ain't I? Didn't I trim yuh? Can't I do it again?"

Spencer sneered and turned away. He went on whittling.

"I—I—— Say, Jack Spencer, if I didn't think so much of you I'd go get a gun and kill you!"

"No yuh wouldn't. Yuh ain't got the guts! Yuh're a low-lived coward. They can't make Tophet hot enough for the likes o' you! 'Green Devil!' Faugh! Cowards blame the booze. Men blame theirselves."

"I—I—guess——"

Hollingsworth stammered. Then he dropped his head in his hands and sat sobbing like a child.

"Forget it! Yuh make me sick slobberin' thataway. What yuh goin' to do now you're out'n the Service?"

"Beat it for the Polynesians. I've a mate's papers. Sailed my own yacht several seasons," Hollingsworth answered after a while. "I'll go on the beach down there, I suppose, and then——"

"Then?"

"The end."

"Why don't yuh finish it quick? What's the use o' waitin' around to die by inches? Take a gun and——"

"I—I—I—can't."

"Yuh're foolin' yerself. Sure yuh can. If yuh say so we'll row out in the Bay toward Corregidor and—I'll do it for yuh."

Hollingsworth looked at him sharply.

"I mean it. It'd be doin' yuh a good turn and be doin' a great favor to the world at large to help sech as you kick off."

"Spencer, I told you this story of mine because—because I—I—thought you would understand."

"And I do understand, pard. Better 'an yuh have any idea. Got any money?"

"Yes—more's the pity. My mother left me a fortune—a couple of millions. I've had the interest only until just now. Under her will I was to come into the principal when I was twenty-eight. Why do you ask?"

"Reckon yuh'll be spendin' it faster 'an you would if you had took on again?"

"Probably."

Spencer sat for several minutes watching two Tagalog boys fighting cocks under a regal palm at the edge of the plaza. Then he turned to Hollingsworth and said:

"They's a spankin' little eighty-six foot schooner over to Cavite that'll be just the caper. You can buy her and fit her out for ten thousand or so. Got that much?"

"What are you talking about?"

"Have yuh got ten thousand—*oro*—handy?"

"Yes, but I——"

"Ye're wantin' to get away from the Green Devil? Yuh want to make a man out'n yerself?"

"I would give every dollar I have; I'd give my life itself to be free from the stuff—to be a man. Even for a little while."

"Willin' to take a jag cure?"

"You mean——?"

"No, none o' them kinds where you throw a lot o' pizen into yuh. It's my own invention. I'm the doctor."

"I tell you I——"

"Sure yuh would! I know. I can beat this Green Devil stuff to a frazzle. And yuh won't be no half idiot when we get through either."

Spencer rolled a cigarette and sat smoking for several minutes. Hollingsworth watched him expectantly.

"THIS may sound a little queer to yuh—unless yuh know the Philippines better'n I think yuh do," Spencer observed after a while. "But it's Gospel. They's a big Norwegian—he's an American from Minnesota—over to the navy yard that's spent a year or so down

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among the Southern Islands—Tawi-Tawis, Jolo, Mindanao, Palawan and them. Name's Eyvund Sunne.

"You savvy? Graduated at Annapolis. Resigned after a while and went to mining in South Africa. Then he went to Colorado and Montana. He's a practical miner—same as I be. Then he come over here pearlin' in the China Sea. Rover, dare-devil, crazy fortune hunter. You know the kind.

"He's the guy that took the soundings off Corregidor and brought that fleet in on a certain May morning a few years ago. Ever hear about that? No? Well, they ain't never been any too much said about it, as you might say. It's a long story. I'll tell yuh some day.

"Once he was pesticatin' around along the Agusan River and he runs slap dab into a bunch o' Spanish traders from Manila jus' goin' to make dog meat out of a nice young man all dressed in white. This here Norwegian from Minnesota ripped a couple o' Spaniards open with a *kris* and took the nice young man all dressed in white away with him.

"It turned out that this here young man was a son of the Sultan's uncle. He had started out to do a little rubberneckin', as you might say. But some way or 'nother, when he gets along about to Loreto, he sudden-like gets the *juramentado* bug.

"Shaves off his eyebrows, covers his phiz with rice-flour, slips into a white night-gown-lookin' costume and starts out to die killin' Christians. To a Moro, yuh understand, anybody's a Christian who ain't a Mohammedan.

"Well, this nice young man gets cotched up by some o' the Spaniards tradin' with the Mandayans, and they is about to put the finishin' touches on him—bein' partial-like to young men with *juramentado* bugs—when up blows this here Sunne person and switches the cut. Savvy?

"What happens? The *juramentado* bug ain't no longer scratching inside o' this here young man's skull. He wants to get back to Pa and Cousin Sultan right *pronto*. There's a nice little harem down on one of the Tawi-Tawis waitin' for him. An' he calcalates the concubines is shore getting lonesome without their lord and master.

"When they gets back to Jolo, what does the Sultan do but ask Sunne what he wants?

" 'A letter to all the datos,' says Sunne, prompt-like, knowin' his own mind.

"So the Sultan scratches a few o' them Arabic scratches o' his'n and hands a parchment to Sunne. In plain United States the parchment reads, addressed to all the Moro datos, that the aforesaid datos must reco'nize Eyvund Sunne, and any number of friends up to six, and give him the high sign. They must eat 'im and drink 'im, sleep 'im and pass 'im along real polite—and no monkey business. Savvy?

"Now we're gettin' to the milk in the coconut: There's gold in Mindanao. Anybody ever tip it off to yuh? No? Well, it's about the same as a lot o' other things over here. They ain't any too much bein' said.

"Sunne comes back to Manila with a Moro crew an' a dirty little *casco*-lookin' craft with nipa sails. And he's got several sacks o' quartz full o' free millin' ore as big as a kernel o' wheat. Get me? He knows where the gold is.

"No white man has ever been able to get past them Moro *juramentados* and fighting-men with their infernal *krises* and steel-headed arrows.

"If one ever did he never come back to tell us about it, 'cause the black vomit cotched him. Black vomit gets yuh and—in an hour or so yuh lay down and—there yuh are. A crocodile wouldn't hardly take a bite out'n yuh when the black vomit cotches yuh. Buzzard might gobble yuh—but I never did see no buzzards in the Southern Islands.

"This here Sunne he's hep to the black vomit stuff. This here nice young man from Tawi-Tawi has a cure for it. Knocks it stiff in a jiffy. Savvy? Them Malays ain't tellin' every white man what comes along. Stands to reason they wouldn't. 'Pears like you chew a weed that grows common down there, and drink water. Then your black vomit is vamoose. Easy, eh? An' the letter to the datos from the Sultan does the rest."

"Well?"

"You buy that schooner and fit 'er out. The three of us—the Scandinavian and me and you—will beat it down the China Sea. Sunne's a navigator. He knows the archipelago from Sibutu to Ibayat same as you know yer multiplication tables.

"We'll be gone six or eight months. In that time I'll be able to—fix yuh up for fair. And you can bury this here Green Devil down in Mindanao—in Vao. That's where the *oro* is."

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"It sounds good to me," Hollingsworth observed after a couple of minutes. "Of course I don't care anything about the gold, as far as I myself am concerned. But it's a chance to——"

"Exactly! The Scandinavian goes to find the yellow stuff. You go to lose the green stuff. I'll go for—luck."

"I'll do it!" Hollingsworth exclaimed at length. "I have an account in the Hong Kong bank. We'll go down now and get a certified check for whatever you think we'll need. Then we'll go and take a look at the schooner."

III

EYVUND SUNNE had just taken the departure of the schooner *Mucho Oro* and had laid the course for the night, which would take the craft well to the westward of the Lubangs. A snappy breeze was blowing up the China Sea. The sun was slowly setting beyond Scarborough Shoals.

Amidships, where the mainmast was stepped, stood Jack Spencer and Edward DeForrest Hollingsworth. Spencer was talking and shaking a forefinger under the other's nose.

"Now get this dope straight, pard," he said. "Eyvund Sunne is the skipper, o' course. But I'm the doctor. Savvy? Yuh'll take some orders from the Squarehead, like as not. But yuh'll do exactly as I say in everything. And there won't be no monkey business! Yuh get me?"

Spencer pulled out his jack-knife and clipped a piece of shell from the end of a drinking-coconut which a Malay cabin boy had husked for him. Spencer handed the nut to Hollingsworth. The effervescent liquid, slightly milky, bubbled to the brim.

"Dash *that* into yuh and hear it splash!"

Hollingsworth took the coconut and stood looking at Spencer.

"You mean——" he began interrogatively, when the scout interrupted him.

"That yuh ain't to touch a drop o' licker o' any sort from now until we get that *oro!*"

"That's pretty tough, old top. Cutting a man off short that way. I——"

"Maybe so; but I'm the doctor. That's the medicine. And the directions says take it. Then we'll bury the wormwood and anise oil—that Green Devil o' yourn."

Hollingsworth drank the cooling fluid from the coconut. Then he sat down on a coil of rope at the foot of the mast and hugged his knees. Spencer watched him a moment and walked away, chuckling.

From Cavite to Zamboanga, as the crow flies, is probably less than five hundred and seventy-five miles. As the *Mucho Oro* sailed, the traverse is a long one—every foot of fifteen hundred miles.

It was the season of southwest monsoons, which come tearing up from the Java Sea every now and then, smashing, crashing, roaring like a million fiends loosed from the infernal regions. Hence the course through Mondoro Strait, past the Calamianes, the Cyos Isles, Panay and Negros, was out of the question.

The schooner must have sea-room. She must beat her way down the China Sea to Balabac Strait, to the South of Palawan; thence east-sou'east to 120 degrees east longitude and six degrees fifty minutes north latitude; and thence east to the metropolis of Mindanao in Basilan Strait, where, it was planned, she would take on fresh water and provisions.

Also, at Zamboanga the vessel would await the arrival from Davao of Dato Tamay and a company of hillsmen who had been sent for by the Sultan, at Eyvund Sunne's request.

During the three weeks and four days the *Mucho Oro* was fighting against the strong head winds, buffeted about by the fierce monsoons, beating down the sea for days at a time under double-reef, Edward DeForrest Hollingsworth took his place among the Malay crew and did the work of a common sailor. He heaved on sheets and tackles, barefooted and stripped to the waist; he took his turn in the crow's nest; he stood his watch at the wheel. He slushed down and holystoned the deck from stem to stern; he sewed canvas; he scraped masts. Twelve hours out of every twenty-four he worked like a Trojan. He did more hard, dirty work than any three Malays in the fo'castle. And he drank the contents of at least a dozen coconuts every day.

There was a half barrel of whisky in the hold, but it remained unopened. Spencer discovered a demijohn of absinth in the locker in Hollingsworth's cabin aft. He threw it overboard. Hollingsworth watched him, biting his lip the while and punching holes in his calloused palms with his finger-

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nails. But he said no word as he watched the demijohn bobbing far astern.

Lying off Zamboanga one afternoon in a calm, waiting for the tide to turn before going in, Spencer said to the former Signal Corps sergeant:

"Ye're looking like a *wijer*. Muscles hard as nails. Flabbiness all gone. Green Devil all out of yer system. Eh?"

Hollingsworth nodded and turned away. It had been a hard fight; a desperate fight. The work he had not minded. It was the doing without liquor. And now that the poison was, as Spencer had said, all out of his system, the desire for absinth was maddening. It remained in his mind like an insane obsession, soul-racking. He caught hold of the taffrail and gripped it like a vice in his long, slender hands.

In Zamboanga the next night Hollingsworth went ashore to buy supplies. Spencer had trusted him. An hour or so after midnight the scout and the skipper of the *Mucho Oro* found him, blubbering, fighting drunk. He was yelling, howling, beating the air with his fists.

At a Spanish *botica* he had bought a flask of Swiss absinth. At the commissary he had bought a bottle of Old Government. His plight was disgusting, yet pitiable.

Spencer and Sunne watched him for several minutes before he became aware of their presence. Fortunately for Hollingsworth, the commanding officer—a Major of the Eighteenth Infantry—had been a friend of the elder Hollingsworth in the States. He knew the story.

"He's from the little schooner in the Bay, sir. She's flying an American flag," the sergeant of the guard had explained to the Major, who happened along just as Hollingsworth was about to be placed under arrest.

The Major looked a moment in surprise. Then he said:

"Let him alone—but keep an eye on him. His friends doubtless will come ashore before long and take him away."

So Hollingsworth stood, howling his wos to the tree-tops, simpering, sniveling. The Green Devil had him.

"I RECKON, pard," Spencer said to him the next morning as the two stood on the immaculate deck of the *Mucho Oro*, "yuh sort o' forgot the directions. It's too bad. Had all the booze worked out 'n yer system. Now yuh gotta start in right at the commencement of the Spencer treatment and do it all over again—with a few variations. And these, like as not, 'll make yuh think ye're being struck by a thousand o' brick.

"The work, pard, 'll be a little harder—and the hours'll be longer. Then I'm goin' to add somethin' to the general treatment."

Hollingsworth watched the scout narrowly, out of bleary, bloodshot eyes. He tried to moisten his parched lips with his swollen tongue. He felt that every drop of water in his blood had been burned out. He was hot, feverish, nervous—and apprehensive. Spencer grinned.

"I got yer Angora, ain't I? And I'm the doctor, ain't I?"

Spencer stepped nearer, his shoulders slanting, his chin stuck out.

"I—I didn't—mean to," Hollingsworth stammered. "It got me—so quick—I hadn't time to—make a fight. I——"

Spencer let drive with his right. He followed this with a terriffic jab to the pit of the stomach with his left. His arms worked like great piston-rods. A perfect rain of blows fell on Hollingsworth's nose, chin, eyes, ribs, and in the pit of his stomach—a dozen blows that would have killed an ordinary man. They only staggered Hollingsworth.

After perhaps twenty seconds Hollingsworth's brain began to work. He crouched and fought back. He guarded, he ducked, he blocked, he sidestepped cleverly. Once he managed to strike the big fellow in front of him who, had he known how to deliver a blow as well as Hollingsworth, would have ended the fight with the first one.

After a while Spencer grasped him in his thewy arms and crushed him, as a boa constrictor might crush a fawn. Then, after a moment, with a half-nelson Spencer threw him—weakened, bleeding profusely, all but unconscious—to the deck and planted a boot in his ribs. Spencer kicked him again and again.

"That's for yer own sake," he said as he kicked. "That's for yer wife's sake—the little *señorita Americana* ye're goin' to marry some day back in the States. That's for the fust kid; that's for the second one!"

The scout stood looking down at him, sorrowful, yet smiling.

"Get up!" he bellowed after a minute.

Hollingsworth tried to rise to his feet, but could not.

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"Grab a yank there," Spencer called to the Malay bo'sun.

The two lifted Hollingsworth to his feet.

"Fetch a bucket o' water! Now, you Edward DeForrest Hollingsworth, the gosh dingedest muttonhead that ever paddled after a bellwether, wash that mug o' yourn. You look like sin."

"You—put the boot to me!" Hollingsworth exclaimed hotly after a while, when he had been cleaned up a bit and sat in a canvas deck chair aft, his face covered with adhesive plater. "You're a coward, Jack Spencer! By gad, I'll——"

"Shut up, or I'll do it all over again."

Spencer stood leaning against the chart house. He looked at Hollingsworth and smiled. Hollingsworth saw the smile and his expression changed. He coughed and turned away his head.

THREE days later the *Mucho Oro* again put sea and began the hard traverse to the Gulf of Davao, with Dato Tamay and his company of hillsmen aboard. It was only four hundred miles of sailing through the Celebes Sea, but certain to take every minute of two weeks, at that season, with contrary winds, occasional mysterious calms, then merciless death-dealing storms which would carry her back, or far out of her course.

And for fourteen and fifteen hours out of every twenty-four Hollingsworth hauled at sheets and tackles; he holystoned the deck until it seemed as if he would rub it through; he scraped the masts, sandpapered them, painted them. He stood long watches at the wheel in the hardest blows; he sat for hours in the crow's nest.

When there was nothing else for him to do he ran up and down the main deck for an hour and more at a time. Spencer stood by, cursing him, threatening him.

"Faster there!" he would shout. "Faster, faster!"

And Hollingsworth would increase his speed, racing back and forth, back and forth, while the Malays watched and grinned.

"Some day, Jack Spencer! Some day I'll get back that Angora—and then I'll kill you!" Hollingsworth would mutter, his teeth clenched, his lips closed over them tightly. "Some day!"

Then he would look at Spencer. The scout would meet his glance squarely—and smile. Hollingsworth would cough and turn away his head.

IV

THROUGH the narrow channel, rock-ribbed and snarling, the *Mucho Oro* slipped one moonlit night, in tow of two wh'l'buts filled with Moros. Hollingsworth was for'd heaving the lead.

"By the deep five!" he called.

"Port a little," Sunne said to the wheelman.

Far to the southwest Mount Apo could be seen rearing itself ghostlike in the silver light. A strange stillness hung over the water, plashing rhythmically along the ship's sides. There was no sound but the dip, dip, dip of the oars as the Moros rowed sturdily, and the swish of the leadline as it played; then the *ptt-chug* of the lead as it struck the water.

Neither on the island in the Gulf nor on the mainland to port was there a beach. Jagged peaks of rock lifted their ugly heads above the jungles, which began almost at the water's edge. The *Mucho Oro* came to a stop at length and the anchor went rattling overside in twelve fathoms.

"Davao ought to be along here on the port side," Spencer observed, as Hollingsworth came aft a few minutes later.

"There's a native town back there five or six miles," Hollingsworth answered.

"That was Davao," Captain Sunne remarked. "But we're not going to pay the place a visit. We're going to head up the Gulf in the morning until we strike a little settlement on the northeast coast known hereabouts as Baagan. Then we're going to strike straight into the interior, over the foothills and into the Surigao Mountains. The bo'sun and the crew, with a few of the hillsmen, will remain aboard."

"Can you trust 'em?" Hollingsworth asked, dubious.

"To the end of the world!" Sunne replied. "They're my friends, these Moros. Once a Moro is your friend he'll go the limit."

The next day at noon found the party, guided by Dato Tamay, making their way through the dense forest. At times the men had to stop to cut away vines and interlacing boughs before they could proceed. There was no trail. Cockatoos and white-coated monkeys chattered and screamed. Strange lizards in the treetops called "*Pulk*

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youl Pulk you-u-u." Swarms of wonderful butterflies—some of them measuring eight and ten inches from tip to tip—flew hither and thither among the trees and sailed away aloft, like birds. The air was hot, sultry, stifling.

Hollingsworth, carrying a great pack which Spencer himself had strapped on his back, trudged along, saying never a word. Sometimes he smiled and chuckled softly. His eyes sparkled. Strong, virile, a massive structure done in bronze he was, trudging along apparently as happy as a child on a day's outing.

In the late afternoon the party entered a beautiful valley just before the climb into the rugged mountains along the eastern coast. They had traveled twenty-six miles since dawn. Mount Mayo was to be seen to the southeast poking its hideous head into a bank of purple and crimson clouds.

Another day brought them to the little tunnel in the side of a mountain whence Sunne had taken several sacks of rich, gold-bearing quartz. There was an abundance of running water near—a bubbling mountain stream, clear and cold. There was shelter from the monsoons, be they from the southwest or northwest. There was plenty of fuel about, and hardwood timber for building purposes.

The crude stamp mills which had been brought down from Manila, where Sunne had stored them several years ago, waiting to make the venture in Mindanao, were carried over on the backs of the Moros from the Gulf in sections, as they had been shipped to Manila from Australia. Lumber, also, for the sluice boxes with which the *Mucho Oro* mine was to be equipped, was carried over the hills and across the valley on the backs of the Moros. A trail, a great part of which it was necessary to corduroy, was first opened from the Gulf, where the schooner lay, to the mine. Along this, on skids, the boiler and engine to operate the stamps were dragged.

It was hard, tedious work. The weather was fiercely hot. For six weeks and more the wind blew steadily from the south. The breath of the South Sea it was, moisture-laden, extremely enervating.

But every day Hollingsworth worked as few other men ever could have worked. He was indefatigable. Often he laughed to himself as he worked.

"Lay hold o' that timber there," Sunne might order, for instance, addressing the Moros.

Hollingsworth would jump to the task ahead of them and lift more than any three of them together.

"Chop down that tree," Spencer might command a Moro.

Hollingsworth would grab an ax and swing it crashing into the hard wood of the tree's butt before the native's mind had comprehended what was expected of him.

Tirelessly, willingly, with enthusiasm and vigor, he performed every task set for him and many which were intended to be performed by the Malays.

The gold-bearing quartz was near the surface, on the side of the mountain. It was covered by soft gravel—the burden—which was easily stripped. Fifty Moros worked from early until late every day. Among them Hollingsworth swung a pick or wielded a shovel.

Then came the benching. Heavy labor that, there in the tropics, within seven degrees of the equator and with the South Sea breathing ever on them its moisture-laden, enervating breath. But Hollingsworth worked on, day after day, as they blasted and picked at the metalliferous mass.

The stamps and the engine were set up. The ore was crushed and sluiced and then treated with a solution of potassium cyanide, the addition of zinc to which precipitated the precious metal. The tailings were not worth much at the *Mucho Oro* mine when Sunne finished with the quartz. And this went easily from twelve to eighteen dollars to the ton. A rare bonanza!

"WE CAN clean up now any time," Sunne said one evening as the three white men lounged in their cabin of mahogany, ebony and *velota*. Spencer lay sprawling in a rude hammock chair, made of slab boards and strung together with strips of alligator hide and bamboo bark. Hollingsworth was poring over a manual of metallurgy. Sunne sat quietly smoking in a bamboo chair.

"The boys who got back from the schooner this afternoon say the crew are getting anxious to be moving," Sunne went on after a while. "And we're nearly out of provisions."

"How much yuh reckon we can clean up, cap?" Spencer asked.

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"I figure it'll run pretty close to $125,000."

"And we've been here just six months!" exclaimed Spencer, slapping his leg. "Let's beat it."

He glanced furtively at Hollingsworth.

"We ought to bring in with us the next time at least ten more stamps," Sunne said, scratching his head and making a mental estimate of the amount of ore they could treat with the added facilities. There was a mountain of gold! It belonged to the man who had the hardihood to go after it—and get it out, which was another matter. Not every one had a letter from the Sultan of Jolo to all the datos. Nor did every one know a cure for black vomit.

A week later the party was ready to break camp. The gold dust, in heavy canvas bags, had been packed on the backs of several Moros. The machinery had been skidded up to the second terrace and covered over with heavy timbers. The sluice boxes had been taken down and piled under a shelving rock on the mountainside.

Spencer sat lacing his brogans. Hollingsworth stood watching him, curiously, exultantly. Sunne was fastening the heavy padlock on the cabin. The company of hillsmen, under Dato Tamay, were restless, eager to be away. They all had been paid their wages in glittering American gold—six new-minted eagles to the man. These would find their way into the exchange at Zamboanga before the passing of many days. There were many wonderful things one could get at the exchange with a shining American eagle!

The air had been particularly humid, oppressive. It was sticky, stinking hot. There had been no breath of wind. Nimbus-clouds were lowering.

Suddenly there came a rumbling from beyond the mountain peaks; the mountains seemed to hunch their backs and violently shake themselves. Here and there the earth opened in great yawning pits. Avalanches came crashing down with a deafening, horrifying roar. The sun's light was shut out by great clouds of dust which rose from the rushing, crushing, crashing, smashing piles of rock and gravel which seemed to be filling the valley.

The first shock was followed almost immediately by a second, more severe. Then another, and another. Seven fearful shocks there were, in rapid succession. One of them was of more than a minute's duration. It was the end of the world!

When the sun broke at last through the clouds of dust it was a horrible sight on which it looked down. The workings of the *Mucho Oro* mine were buried under thousands of tons of rock and gravel. At least a score of the Moros either had been buried under great masses of rock and *débris* or had been sucked into the yawning pits which had closed again, as weirdly as they had opened. Many of the others had been cut and bruised by flying stones and the limbs of trees which had grown on the mountain's breast.

Jack Spencer lay on his back; a stone weighing several hundred pounds was on his left leg. His face was cut and bleeding. His right arm was pinned under a heavy timber which had been hurled from the terrace far above him.

Sunne had been thrown against a tree, his head striking a jagged, broken limb. Blood was streaming from several cuts on his face, arms and head.

Hollingsworth was the only one of the entire party, either white or black, who had not been injured. He had received not so much as a scratch.

How they ever managed to get back to the schooner none of the three intrepid gold-seekers ever will be able to remember. Spencer was carried on a stretcher swung on the backs of four Moros. The stretcher was made of one of Hollingsworth's blankets fastened to two long *taurolo* saplings. Sunne staggered along behind him. It was Hollingsworth who led the way.

Not an ounce of gold dust had been saved. The Moros on whose backs the dust had been so carefully packed were buried under twenty feet of rock.

V

AS THE moon was coming up one night out of the Celebes Sea to the east, Spencer lay in a deck-chair on the poop, his left leg, badly fractured, bound in rude splints. Eyvund Sunne was standing a watch. A Malay boy was at the wheel. A good breeze was blowing offshore—fragrant and spicy, balmy, exhilarating, cooling as rare wines of Spain; a mysterious, sighing, love-laden wind from off the crests of the mountains whose huge bulks seemed to rise up and brutally blot

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out half the stars in the heavens. The sea ran in long, undulating swells, wearing coronets of silver, on which the phosphorus played.

Hollingsworth came on deck. He had been relieved from his watch aft less than an hour before. Spencer turned to him, eagerly.

"I say, old top," Hollingsworth began, smiling. "The Green Devil is overside!"

"I—don't quite get yuh."

"I—I—I had another demijohn in the bottom of my locker. You didn't find it. I took it out a while ago and uncorked it. I smelled of it. It made me sick. To make sure I put my lips to the mouth of the demijohn and turned it up. Then I knew. Savvy? I threw the demijohn out through the porthole. You may have heard it splash and thought it was a fish jumping." He laughed and held out his hand to the scout, sitting there with his left leg resting on a long box covered with blankets, his right arm in a sling, his head swathed in bandages, smelling of arnica.

Spencer grasped the outstretched hand in his left one.

"I told yuh we'd bury the thing," Spencer said after a while.

"But we didn't get the gold."

Hollingsworth glanced at Sunne, who stood looking out to sea, rocking from heels to toes, from toes to heels, as his Norse ancestors had done for a thousand years.

"N-n-no."

Spencer followed Hollingsworth's glance. It had been a sore disappointment to Eyvund Sunne.

"We coppered the *juramentado* and fighting Moro stuff, and the black vomit. But we overlooked the dog-gone earthquakes."

Hollingsworth walked over to Sunne.

"Forget it, Captain," he said. "When we get back to Manila I'll draw a hundred and fifty thousand. You and Jack may cut it two ways—to suit yourselves."

He turned to Spencer, laughing lightheartedly, like a boy.

"It was worth a hundred times that to me, Jack, old top," he said. "And—I got back my Angora!"

For several minutes he stood leaning against the taffrail. Then he turned quickly to Spencer and said:

"Ever since that morning in the bay at Zamboanga, Jack, I've been trying to get myself in shape to be able to give you the worst trimming a man ever got. The day we left the mine—just before the 'quake—I decided to try it as soon as we came aboard. You see, I——"

He looked away.

"I didn't know then your treatment had——"

He laughed.

"But now, you see, I——"

"Don't care a whoop whether you trim me or not," Spencer interrupted.

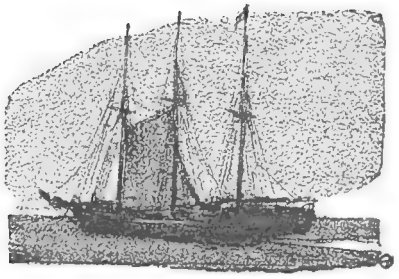
He smiled up at Hollingsworth—that slow, irresistible smile of his.

"I'm not strong for trimmings, Jack," said Hollingsworth. "That's the deuce of it."

Hollingsworth stepped quickly to the scout's side and laid a hand on the big man's shoulder.

"Getting tired, Jack? Want me to carry you below?"

The *Mucho Oro* continued merrily on her way, reeling off the knots like a clipper-ship.



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A STRANGE TOWN

by WALTER VOGDES

THE engineer caught a glimpse of red light. The wheels crunched as he applied the brakes. Like a gleaming snake on a black velvet cloth the train twisted out of the night into the lighted city.

Spenny was dreaming, but 'way back in his brain a sound was formed and the dream faded. He stirred uneasily in his green-plush Pullman chair. The sound of a voice completed the process of awakening.

"I think we're stuck for sure."

The Pullman conductor had said it. Spenny roused himself, yawned discreetly and glanced at the open magazine in his lap. The passengers were leaving the car.

"What is it?" he asked the conductor.

"Smash-up on the line thirty miles ahead. We'll be held up here for three hours or more. You might as well spend the time in looking around this town."

Spenny accepted the tip and followed the passengers into a massive station. A moment later and he was on the main street of a typical American city of electric signs and moving-picture palaces.

He stood by the curb, undecided, not even knowing the name of the community in the lap of which he had been dropped.

"A strange town," he mused. "I wonder what they call it? I must be somewhere in the Middle West."

He remembered that his train had stopped at Denver early in the day, and he had dozed, and read, and dozed until the conductor's tidings wakened him.

Spenny was a young engineer; a big, good-looking chap, and always running into adventures. He had been working in lower California for a New York firm when, quite suddenly, he had been called East.

From a near-by corner came the martially religious strains of a Salvation Army band. Street-cars rattled by and crooned away in the distance.

A closed motor car passed and Spenny saw a girl's face at the window. She was leaning forward. He caught the glint of a white feather in her dark, snug-fitting hat. Her chin rested on a white-gloved hand. She was looking directly at him with unseeing eyes. The look of discontent, of longing, that he saw there drew him up short. Her lips were parted. She was wonderful and—she was gone.

There was a lull in traffic. In front of a saloon across the street a man and woman were talking. The woman's white fingers clutched the man's arm; her pleading murmur reached Spenny, though the words eluded him. Then, like a flash, her companion whirled his arm around, shook himself loose, and ran into the saloon. The woman staggered and crumpled down noiselessly with her head in her arms.

With long strides Spenny was across the street. She raised her face as he lifted her up. Astonishment, then chagrin, sped

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across her features. Plainly, she had hoped it would be her companion. Instead the keen eyes of a stranger looked into hers.

"He's a goner," she moaned. "He's such a fool when he's soused. They'll get him. They're sure to."

"Your husband?"

"Not yet. We're almost married. Oh, he's such a fool, and I'm afraid."

THE misery in her chalky doll-face was startling. It was like a portrait, by an artist who excels in depicting prettiness, that has been streaked and marred by unfortunate usage. Both the scars of pain and the prettiness remained. She was in black, the funereal uniform of the shop-girl the world over.

"Where do you live?" Spenny asked.

The girl named a street and number.

"Is it far from here?"

"A few squares."

"You can walk home, can't you?" the man inquired.

"Yes."

"Then hurry there at once and I'll get this man of yours home safe."

A gleam of hope came into her tired eyes.

"Just leave him to me. By the way, what's his name?"

"Pete—Pete Mithins."

Spenny watched her walk away. Then he pushed the saloon door open and stepped inside.

The room was alive with light and talk. An atmosphere of odors—bad whisky and stale tobacco smoke in equal parts—gushed toward him. The first assistant bartender, a red-faced, fat youth, took his order.

In the center of a group midway down the bar stood Pete Mithins, a narrow-shouldered, pale-faced, alley-bred, factory-worked youth—or so he seemed to Spenny. The boy's long fingers clutched his glass, his eyes were fiery, his black slouch hat was pushed back until it threatened to leave his head from the rear.

Spenny sipped his drink slowly and watched. Pete Mithins was buying, not in turn, but every time. It was his night, he told the crowd. Also, he was mixing the drinks. The moments passed and Spenny planned his course. But a sudden turn in events changed it.

With the turning of a phrase Pete and another one of the drinkers were in the midst of an angry argument. Spenny never knew quite how it happened, but Pete suddenly went reeling from a stiff blow on the jaw. Then missiles flew, an electric chandelier was smashed, a whisky bottle shattered a mirror back of the bar, and Pete Mithins was trampled under foot.

Spenny hunched his body forward and his shoulders sent two men sprawling. He found the boy prostrate. It was the work of seconds to lift him up and out of the crowd. No one noticed Spenny's act, or at least no one interfered. Out of the corner of his eye he saw two policemen with drawn clubs push the street doors open. The policemen saw him, too. Another step, and he had carried his limp burden through a door at the rear to a small, poorly lighted, private dining room.

The escape was only temporary. As Spenny looked around, Pete Mithins groaned. His eyelids flickered and lifted. He stared vaguely; then, seeming to recall, pawed for the floor with his feet. Spenny stood him up.

"Keep quiet if you want to get out of this," he warned. "Can you walk?"

Pete roused himself and rubbed his head. "Sure I can."

"Well then, come on."

Yells and the sound of crashing glass came from the other room. Spenny led the way through another door that opened into darkness. He bumped against a cask. Dank odors from moist kegs met them. Pete Mithins was following blindly, his hand on his rescuer's shoulder.

It was a long room, but they finally came to the end of it. With more groping Spenny found the door and slid the bolts at top and bottom. Then he stopped, for a padlock, large, formidable, and securely fastened, met his fingers.

"LOCKED!"

"Thunder!" muttered Pete. He was sobering up.

"Got a match?" asked Spenny.

Pete fumbled in his pockets. There was a sputter and a yellow splash. A key was hanging on the wall directly before them, and Spenny seized it and inserted it in the lock. With the padlock removed, the door opened easily and the fugitives stepped cautiously into a narrow, unpaved alley.

The fight in the saloon was attracting attention. Thumping feet and darting silhouettes in a street a scant hundred feet

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away told of the gathering crowd. On the other side of the alley was a high fence. Spenny mounted an ash barrel, placed his hands on the rim of boards and drew himself up. Pete Mithins tried to follow suit, but would have failed had Spenny not reached down a lean, muscular hand and drawn him up bodily.

The two men loosened their hold and dropped on a velvety lawn. Both were panting. But while Pete Mithins's hands trembled and his head was rocking dizzily, Spenny had the cool bearing of one who is taking part in an adventure apart from his own interests.

A high, narrow building, black and sharp angled, looked menacingly down on them. Its windows were dark, but as they stared, light appeared at one and a man raised it, placed his hands on the sill and peered down.

Pete seemed to cower.

"Sh," came from Spenny. "He can't see us."

"I know it," whispered Pete. "It's me nerves. I can't seem to hold 'em in. If they get me to-night I'm a goner."

Spenny glanced at his drawn, fear-stricken face curiously. Something more than a mere casual fear of the police gripped the boy.

When they looked at the house again the light was gone. Spenny and Pete crept toward the building, keeping in the shadow of the fence, and so passed through the yard without misadventure. A step or two more and they had vaulted a low, iron-picketed fence and were walking rapidly along a wide street of shade trees, front yards and ornate houses.

Spenny hailed a cab and pushed Pete inside. "Drive straight ahead—and fast," he ordered the driver.

The man whipped up his horses and Pete Mithins leaned back on his cushioned seat in wordless relief. Spenny looked at him more carefully and noted his thin face and reckless, bright eyes. The cab lurched and the staccato thud of the horse's feet broke frequently as the ill fed, overworked animal lost its stride.

"Say, who are you, friend?" The remark came from Pete. For the first time he was beginning to think of something besides escape.

"Me?" Spenny laughed. "I just happened to be taking a drink when the row started. I saw you go down and thought I'd give you a lift. Don't object, do you?"

"It was blamed white of you, blamed white," said Pete, leaning forward. "You carried me into the back room, didn't you?"

"Yes."

IT WAS plain to Spenny that the boy was hunting for some motive for this act of kindness. That a stranger should go out of his way to help him was so antipodal to all Pete's knowledge of life and men that he was nonplussed. Still, as Spenny did not volunteer anything further, he realized that it was not for him to turn inquisitor.

Spenny opened the cab door and, as the driver looked around, he told him the street and number the girl had named. The words had a vivific effect on Pete. His eyes became electric with curiosity. Still Spenny vouchsafed no explanation and they sat in silence while the cab twisted around corners and finally up a narrow street, lined with plain brick, two-story houses.

It was a street peculiar to any community where city planning has yet to make itself felt. Asphalt and brick contrived successfully to hide all evidences of earth. There were no porches, no yards. Gray stone steps protruded like feverish tongues from heated mouths.

A cab was a novelty there and as it flashed by occasional street lamps, gangs of raucous-voiced children left their play to follow it. Women and dust-stained men on door-steps quit gossiping to stare. The cab stopped.

Spenny, who was the keener eyed, saw a dark figure huddled in a doorway. He fancied he heard a muffled sob as he pushed Pete Mithins from the cab ahead of him.

The figure in the doorway moved and he saw the girl's white face. For a moment she stood, silently fighting to bring her buffeted and numbed faculties back to order. Then she gave a low moan of happiness. There was something of absolute fury in the way she threw herself in her lover's arms.

Spenny's cab, with that gentleman inside, was clattering far down the street before they knew of his departure. He leaned back and noted that the cabby turned several corners. Then he ordered a halt.

To pay and dismiss the man was the act of a moment. Spenny looked around and

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found he was still in the poorer section of the city. The adventure had been like a cold bath, and he emerged eager and exhilarated. A glance at his watch told him the hour was still early, and, as he paused, undecided, the sound of music—catchy, impudent dance music — made his pulses quicken. Again there came that glad-to-be-home feeling. Every man, woman and child in the city who could pucker a whistle knew the tune Spenny heard. He didn't know it, but he knew the spirit of it.

The watch slid back in Spenny's pocket and his feet, without any assistance from his brain, moved toward the sirenical melody.

"I'll just look things over," he thought, and then a scene of movement and rich hues unfolded before him.

He stood at the end of a small street and gazed at a bewildering stretch of torches and swinging Japanese lanterns. A street carnival was in progress. From the depths of the thoroughfare came the blare of a band. Overhead, the lanterns formed a succession of arches and on the asphalt pavement dancers intermingled. From vantage points on doorsteps and in open windows, older folk looked on and beamed approval. Children darted among the dancers uttering shrill cries. There were frequent collisions. The air was thick with confetti and light with the smoke from red and green torches.

Into this medley Spenny stepped with confidence. A group of little girls bore down on him unobserved and pelted handfuls of confetti in his face, while he sputtered and raised his arms to ward off the shower. His small assailants drew off with gleeful howls and he heard their laughter down the street as they sought new victims. Laughing and choking, he backed up against the brick wall of a house.

"Ain't they a caution?" said a rotund and sympathetic matron. Spenny admitted that they were.

The frolickers were passing and repassing so close to one another that they formed streams. A slight lull in the movement gave an outlook for some distance along the street. Spenny started, then looked again. Approaching slowly was the girl he had seen in the motor car earlier in the evening.

She was smiling and unconcerned, and she was alone. All Spenny's interest focused on her, for the contrast between her thoroughbred beauty and the surrounding merrymakers was unmistakable. The men and girls around her sensed this and stared curiously. Spenny smiled as he saw her throw back her head with an unconsciously superb gesture to elude a shower of confetti. Her white-gloved hands were lifted, a wisp of hair escaped from under her trim, small hat and, far away as he was, Spenny noted the richness of her inconspicuous attire. Then something happened.

A WHOOPING horde of men and boys came down the street back of the girl. Compactly formed in a flying wedge, they swept dancers and pedestrians forward. The girl was in their path and Spenny, seeing the danger, jumped toward it. He was a scant thirty feet away when the flying human mass caught her. Even as he struggled forward he marveled at her coolness.

The girl's eyes widened with sudden fright as she was lifted from her feet, and then Spenny saw her lips tighten. She settled herself valiantly to escape being drawn under. Her face was upturned. She was fighting for breath.

Spenny sank down and applied his shoulder for the second time that night. He came up twenty feet from the girl, his jaw grimly set. In his eyes, keen with the struggle, was a look of anxiety. Suppose the brutes should trample her under foot before he could get there! As he watched, her hands fluttered to her head, in a wholly feminine desire to save her hat, despite the imminence of real danger. Spenny was a head taller than those nearby, and, as he braced himself for another plunge, the girl saw him.

For a long time he remembered her look. The lips parted in an appealing smile in which, despite her desperate situation, there was just a trace of challenge. It caught him like a taut wire. But even as he smashed his way forward, her head disappeared. She was down.

Spenny was a powerful man and he used his strength ruthlessly. As the girl, her ankle turned by a misstep, went slowly from sight, he dived through the crowd, counting the forms as he blindly pushed them aside. Then—he was on his knees and his arm was around her waist. Had they injured her, killed her? Sudden fury caught at the man's heart, and the wall of

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flesh gave way as he pried his way to a standing position with the girl in his arms.

A glance told him that her eyes were closed and her face in its calm, white beauty startled him. Her head was against his shoulder, and, from under the hat he had admired, disarranged hair streamed, nut brown and wayward.

He realized that they were moving rapidly with the flying wedge, which seemed to gain momentum with every step. The rush, started as a lark, was rapidly becoming serious. Hats and clothing were lost in the crush. Children shrieked as they were trampled down. Spenny supported the girl with one arm; with the other he warded off interference. Looking ahead, he saw they were nearing the end of the street. Then, like a torrent, which loses force as it spreads over level ground, this human tide spread over the other thoroughfare. Spenny's feet found the asphalt; he was able to walk once more. With his burden in his arms he sought the side of the street.

All his thoughts and strength had been given to keeping his feet. Now, however, he turned his whole attention to the girl. Her eyes had opened; she was looking up at him. As soon as they reached a comparatively safe place against the brick wall of a house she slipped to her feet and steadied herself against his arm.

"Oh, my!" she gasped.

"I should say so," was his equally comprehensive reply.

Then they both laughed, a cordial, relieved laugh; and in her eyes came the glint of challenge again.

"I'm so glad we're out of that," she said.

"So am I," he agreed, "but what's been puzzling me is how you came to be in it."

Her raised eyebrows were interrogative.

"Don't think me a stickler for the obvious when I say you don't belong with that crowd. You're different."

"And so are you!" she came back. I might ask how *you* happened to be there."

He laughed. "I came in search of fun and——"

"Adventure." She supplied the word. "Well, so did I, just for that reason and for no other. I left my respectable family on the way to a respectable theater to see a respectable play. We passed this street on the way. I saw the lights, the lanterns and the dancing. I heard the music and I thought what a lark it would be to get in on it."

The slang phrase loses its pith in print. From her it seemed strange, newly coined and singularly human.

"SO I SAW the family safely in the theater. Then I broke away. Told them I had to telephone and might not be back for a half hour. Luckily it was not the opera—I could never have done it."

She glanced at her plain gown under the cloak.

"You know our town isn't New York. We don't always dress up for the theater. How happy those boys and girls looked."

She glanced back into the brilliantly lighted street, which was regaining its normal spirit of jollity.

"I was hoping some one would ask me for a dance, but no one did."

The corners of her mouth drooped in mock melancholy.

"Of course not," he said. "They, too, knew you different and they were afraid."

"Am I so formidable?"

"That is the wrong word."

"They were afraid, then, that I couldn't dance?"

"Never that."

"And you!" she challenged. "Are you afraid?"

His eyes said, "Do you mean it?" and hers said—something that drew him on. He looked down the small street, then leaned forward slightly.

"May I have this dance?"

The question was never answered. Blue coated and dominant, the form of a policeman obtruded itself between them and the lighted street.

"Here he is now."

The tone was menacing, and Spenny straightened with the sense of danger. Back of the first policeman was another. Spenny recognized them as the men who had entered the saloon when he had rescued Pete Mithins.

"What's the trouble, officer?" he asked, outwardly calm.

"You know, all right, all right," said the nearest man. "You and your pal got away after startin' that row. But we lamped you and we'll get 'Bad Pete' Mithins, too, before the night's over!"

"What's the charge?" demanded Spenny,

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intent on knowing just how guilty the minions of the law thought him.

"I dunno. Maybe murder."

"Murder!"

"Well, not as bad as that. One of them men's in the hospital, cut up bad. It's sure to be disorderly conduct and assault and battery, and maybe intent to kill. Anyway—" with growing impatience—"the judge'll tell you what the charge is in the morning. Come along with us and I'll trouble your lady friend to come, too."

Spenny opened his mouth to protest. But he stopped suddenly, and, forgetting to close it, looked down at his companion. She was trembling with silent merriment. The eyes she turned to him shone with laughter.

"Is it so funny?" he demanded.

The girl tried rather unsuccessfully to straighten her face.

"Perhaps not," she said, suddenly demure. "I suppose it's my way of laughing in the wrong place. I always do it at plays. Only it's the idea. After you have so ably rescued me from that crowd and just as my adventure is about to move into smooth, untroubled waters again, these policemen mistake you for some one else and arrest you for starting a brawl."

"But—" the words came hard to Spenny —"they didn't mistake me for some one else. I'm the right man."

ABSOLUTE amazement shone in her face. The laughter fell away like a mask. "You don't mean—— You—— In a saloon brawl!"

The policeman cut in.

"Remember, everything you say will be used against you," he cautioned bromidically.

"Oh, I'm not afraid," said Spenny impatiently. "I didn't start any brawl," he continued to the girl. "I just happened to be there and I was drawn into it in rescuing a friend."

"Would you mind tellin' the lady who your friend is?"

The policeman's tone was sneering.

"I know his name is Pete Mithins and that's all I know."

"I don't s'pose you know he's known as 'Bad Pete' Mithins and one of the slickest little ex-crooks in town. I don't s'pose you know he's a wonder at this safe-crackin' game and that he's been watched ever since he came out from doin' his last trick. I don't s'pose you know that we had our suspicions that he was workin' close with a gang of Eastern counterfeiters, while he was out on parole."

The policeman dropped all pretence of exaggerated, sneering politeness.

"The minute I spotted you to-night I sized you as one of that Eastern gang. You're one of these swell gentleman crooks, you are. I've heard of 'em. I don't place your mug in the gallery, but I reckon it's there. Now come on, and no more foolin'."

Spenny was dazed. Then his mind skirted back over the events of the evening. He remembered Pete Mithins' strange fear of the police and the white-faced girl's fear for him. It was all too plain.

He looked at the girl by his side and she returned his gaze blankly. Then she drew away, half closed her eyes, and seemed to be weighing him in the balance.

"It isn't so, is it?" she whispered. "No, you aren't that kind."

"Of course not."

He was smiling easily now.

"Merely another case of police—misunderstanding." (Stupidity was the word that came to his lips, but discretion caused him to change it.) "This is going to cause me some unpleasantness, but I don't mind that. But you—— Of course it's all a mistake, yet these flashy Western newspapers will hear about it and play it up to the skies. I once had a friend in newspaper work. This is what he would call a good story."

"Don't mind me," she answered. "We're in a scrape and we've got to get out of it. As soon as we get to the station-house I'll 'phone to the family. I don't know how I'll explain but—— Oh, wait and see. Are you ready, gentlemen?"

The policemen nodded and the four moved away together. The bluecoat looked at the girl and spoke with a note of admiration.

"The station-house is only a few squares away. I won't ring for the wagon if you'll go quietly."

Spenny promised.

"A wagon always draws a crowd," continued the loquacious arm of the law, "and I know you high-class crooks hates publicity."

"Unalterably opposed to it," said Spenny, returning the man's grin, but still

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thinking of the girl by his side. "Stupid mess," he grumbled to himself.

They soon left the scene of the street carnival. One policeman walked behind, while the other flanked the procession. Spenny felt that the rear bluecoat was watching every movement with his pocketed hand on a revolver. Once he glanced around and the man's beady eyes—he was the policeman who didn't talk—were so hard and menacing that Spenny's poise was shaken.

They were avoiding wide and busy thoroughfares. Spenny looked up once to the star-flecked sky of gun-metal color. Next he turned his eyes to the girl and it was then that a lithe form stepped from an alley and contrived to cover both policemen with one revolver.

"WAIT a minute, boys," said the figure softly and savagely. Spenny recognized first the voice, then the face, of Pete Mithins. Pete had the policemen in a line. They both looked into the muzzle of his blue steel weapon, while Spenny and the girl were slightly outside its range.

"Take your hands out of your pockets," he ordered the bluecoat who was trailing, and the latter obeyed. Both men, after the way of their kind, accepted the hold-up calmly. They were prepared to wait and watch, in the hope of catching Pete off his guard.

"Now we can talk." Pete, with his black slouch hat pushed back from his pale forehead, took no pains to hide his identity.

"I saw you boys pull this turn down the street, so I thought I'd take a short cut and head you off at some nice, quiet place."

Pete's eyes were tense and steady, his voice low and icily smooth. Spenny realized that the quiet tone was to reassure the girl, and he was duly grateful. She had remained silent, rigid and white when Pete had slipped so dramatically into the scene. Only the tight grip of her hand on Spenny's arm told him of her fright. She had the sheltered woman's fear of fire-arms—he knew that.

"Steve, you've got this man wrong," Pete Mithins continued, addressing the talkative policeman. "He's no pal of mine. I never saw him before to-night. He just helped me out of a fix. And you've got me wrong if you think I'm in on this crook stuff again. I'm as straight as you are."

"I want you to let 'em both go."

Pete jerked his head toward Spenny and the girl. He made the remark with an air of finality.

The policeman addressed as Steve turned to Spenny.

"Go ahead," he said.

"Don't come between him and me," warned Pete, "or we're gone."

Spenny took the girl's arm and they passed around back of the policemen. Pete's eyes were glued on his prisoners.

"What's going to become of you if we escape?" said Spenny, passing. "You may get away to-night, but they'll get you to-morrow or sometime."

Pete smiled.

"No they won't," he said, his eyes still straight ahead. "They'll never get me while I play straight. I've got a friend at the front. I'll get away and see him to-night. I'll tell him just what's happened and he'll believe me.

"And to-morrow he'll fix things up. I'm safe enough. And say! I heard how you pulled that stunt earlier in the evening. Thanks."

Spenny looked at him, the easy master of a difficult situation, and saw clearly for the first time that heroic quality for which the pretty doll-faced girl worshiped him.

"Go straight ahead to the next street," said Pete. "You can get away easy there. I'll hold Steve and his friend for five minutes."

Pete answered Spenny's farewell.

"So long and good luck," he called.

Once out of sight, they walked rapidly and came to a wide, well lighted and busy street. A gesture called a taxi.

"Where to?" said the driver, when they were safely inside.

The girl turned to Spenny.

"What time is it?" she asked. The hands on his watch pointed to a few minutes before eleven.

"Then drive to the Alcazar Theater. The family will be there until eleven. We may be able to catch them."

With the closing of the taxi door the reaction came. The girl's overwrought nerves did not give way, however. She sank back, her eyes closed, the lids flickering.

"Is there anything I can do?" asked Spenny.

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"No, nothing."

She opened her eyes and smiled.

"Except—— Do you think we're safe?"

"Oh, yes."

"This was more of an adventure than I bargained for."

"You bore it wonderfully but—will you forgive me for getting you into this fix?"

"There's nothing to forgive."

Her eyes were wide open now.

"It wasn't your fault. There's only one request I have to make. Tell me of the boy who rescued us. He was splendid."

As they whisked along he told her, first of Pete Mithins' girl, of the row in the saloon and the subsequent escape. She listened with eyes of wonder and questioned him until he had told his story also.

Then, in the midst of a sentence, she stopped and clutched his arm.

"There they are!"

His first thought was of police. Then, through the window, he caught sight of the big motor car in which he had seen her earlier in the evening. It was moving in the same direction as their own vehicle. Spenny called to the driver to slow down. He swung open the door.

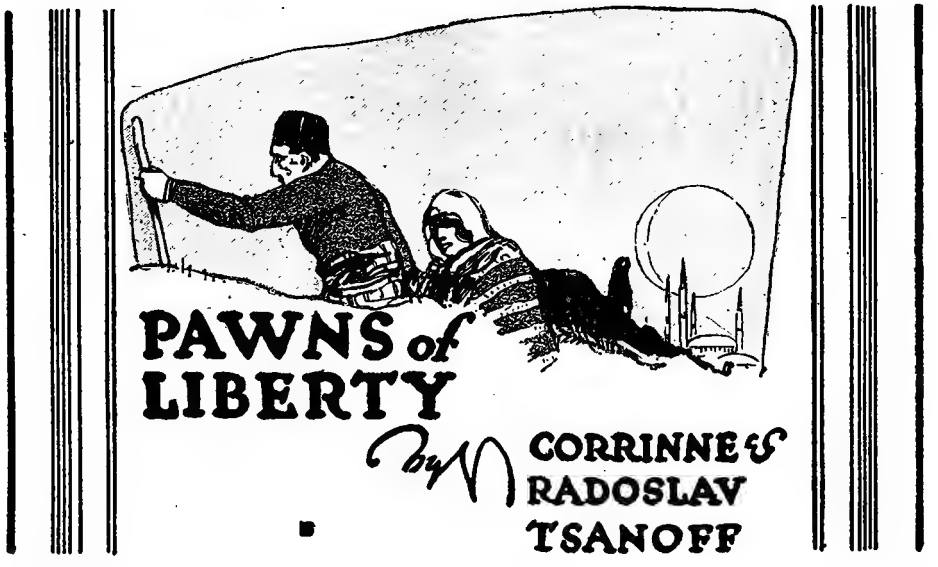
"It's good-night for me," he said.

The machine had stopped and he stood on the step looking in at her.

"You can easily overtake your people and it might be embarrassing to explain my presence."

Their fingers parted, the taxi door closed and Spenny was alone on the curb. He stood with his hands in his pockets, his eyes on the asphalt and his thoughts on the girl.

Then he squared his shoulders and swung around. Before him loomed the massive railroad station where his train waited.



CHAPTER XX

AN OPEN DOOR

THE night had been doubly raw, the clay floor clammier than ever, and a more dismal gloom enveloped the prison cell. The events of the past day haunted Boyan like visions from ghostland. Freedom had knocked at his door, and he had scorned to receive her. Would the chance come again?

Keys jangled uncertainly in the lock. Boyan listened intently. Some one was trying one key after the other and becoming more impatient with every trial. At last, with a vicious jab, one of them slipped into the lock and turned; the door creaked and yielded slowly.

A dim ray of light from a dark lantern flickered over the wall. Boyan could distinguish a black figure behind it. A ray of

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light sought him uncertainly. At last he heard, in a somewhat shaky voice——

"*Bash-Komitaji*, aren't you here?"

He gasped in amazement.

"You! Is it you? How did you ever get to this hole?"

"Selim Bey allowed me one more trial. I persuaded him to let me come to you here. Nameless One—" she came to him and caught his arm—"let us escape from this awful place."

He drew aside, astonished.

"Who are you? And how can we escape?"

She clasped his arm again.

"Mihirmah is my name. I am the Sultan's, a gift to Murad Pasha, and my life is weary in this palace. Promise you will take me with you, and I will help you escape."

"But how? This is madness. If we could get away, you could not bear the journey. We should only be recaptured."

Boyan spoke in gasps. Even as he discouraged her, his heart beat high with the madness of new-born hope.

She was sanguine.

"Oh yes, we can get away. But promise; will you take me with you?"

Boyan hesitated—and yet it was his only chance.

"Well?" she asked anxiously.

"I shall do my best to protect you," he answered.

Stifling a joyous cry, she hung the lantern on the door-knob so that the light would fall on them both. She threw off her veil and a long, black mantle.

"Leave your cassock here and put on these," she ordered. "I am dressed in Aisha's clothes. With this charcoal on my face—see—we shall deceive them all."

She held the lantern so that he might see. In the dusk her disguise seemed perfect, but Boyan wondered how it would look in the daylight. She arranged the mantle about him and draped the veil closely over his face.

"Be very careful and keep close to me. Don't let your shoes show. In the harem they think I am off to spend the day. Selim Bey expects me to visit you this afternoon. If we can get in my carriage, which is waiting at the court, we'll have four or five hours' start. Now, are you ready?"

Boyan took a step and lunged forward.

"Don't walk as if you had a cassock on," she cried. "This cloak must be long, so your shoes won't show. Move this way."

She paraded before him in a gliding, sweeping step.

"Now try. Don't kick! Slip your feet along, but don't shuffle."

She smiled up at him, her hand on the door.

"One word before we go, my Master Rebel. I am saving you because I love you. I am going with you because I love you, but not as I loved you yesterday."

She stopped, waiting, hoping he would answer. Her heart beat wildly; her hand trembled on the door-knob. She touched his hand through the long folds of his sleeve.

"Do not answer," she said. "I know you do not love me. But tell me this. Do you trust me? Say you believe in me."

Slowly his hands closed over her own.

"I must believe in you, Mihirmah."

She pulled the door open. They stood together in the corridor.

CHAPTER XXI

THROUGH THE DOOR

THE dim gleam of the night-lantern guided them uncertainly down the dark corridor. Mihirmah went first. One turn after another led off into mysterious, mazy passages. At one corner they heard groans and cries—low, as if coming from a great distance.

"I wonder who it is?"

Boyan paused. The woman shrugged her shoulders and hurried on.

The passage ended at a heavy iron door. Together they fitted a key and stepped out into a hall, bright with the morning sunlight. At the right of the entrance the door of the jailer's room stood ajar, and inside at the table the old Moslem himself nodded over a half emptied cup of coffee.

Mihirmah stole to the table and laid down the keys. Boyan waited motionless in a shadowed corner. No one guarded the hall, but the court outside was full of noisy soldiery.

"Come this way," the woman whispered. "We don't want to meet any more of them than necessary."

She turned to the side into a narrow passage and out under large archways that connected the inner with the outer court.

"We must cross these arches to the hall beyond," she said. "That leads to the

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women's outer court and we shall find the carriage in front of it. Our real danger is there."

Glancing about hastily, they started under the arches. Mihirmah grabbed Boyan's arm convulsively as a loud cry just around the corner startled them.

"You donkey-eared duck-foot!" a coarse voice roared. "You impudent calf-head!"

Two soldiers in hot pursuit of a third dashed into the entry. All three saw the tall, veiled figure hurrying across the passage and came to a quick stop.

"Hello there, pretty one," the first of them called. "What's the hurry?"

"Don't mind them, gracious *Hanoum*," Mihirmah imitated Aisha's cracked tones. "They dare not touch the flower of Murad Pasha's garden."

"Hist!" whispered the other two soldiers. "This is no pasture for us to graze in."

Mihirmah pushed the door open and shoved Boyan inside.

"Don't stiffen like that," she scolded. "You can't fight here. Be limp. And don't pay attention to any one."

HERE too the hall was empty, but there were voices in the rooms near by where slaves ran about, their sandaled feet patting the bare floors. Boyan noted only that the floors were polished and the walls highly decorated, for he dared not turn his head. Suddenly Mihirmah shoved him into a dark doorway.

Three slaves bearing large platters of fruit on their heads came pattering down the hall, singing a gay snatch of song as they ran along. The two waited until a door closed on the fruit-bearers. Then they sped on. A large portal opened into a court full of flower-beds, with here and there a fountain, straw-wrapped for the Winter. Mihirmah led Boyan behind a pillar.

"Wait," she whispered, and ran away.

She was gone only an instant, but it seemed ages to him. When she returned, she was carrying a heavy shopping bag.

They passed the portal and crossed the deserted court. Above them was the window where Mihirmah had stood when she saw Boyan for the first time. Her heart pounded as she wondered if any curious eyes were looking through the lattice now.

Two eunuchs waited at the gate. They opened mechanically, noticing only the tall, veiled figure, and prepared to follow, but Mihirmah motioned them back and swung the gates together herself. They stared in stupid wonder, but she did not pause.

"Praise be to Allah!" she breathed as she saw the carriage drawn before the gate.

The horses stamped restlessly, eager to be off; the coachman, a withered old eunuch, blew his hands and paced up and down to keep his feet warm. He hurried to assist his mistress, but Boyan had already stumbled in. Mihirmah sprang after and snapped the latch.

"Drive to the Buk Beechwoods, and be quick about it," she ordered in black Aisha's own fashion.

The old man asked no questions. He whipped up the horses and the carriage sped away.

Above, in the common sitting-room, Zayleh saw it go.

"Well, we're free of the Thunder *Hanoum* for a few hours," she muttered spitefully.

Old Aisha, crouched in Mihirmah's private sitting-room, waiting anxiously for her darling's return.

"I ought not to have left her at the entrance," she mumbled again and again.

She waited one hour, two. She could stand it no longer.

"I am going to Selim Bey," she groaned defiantly. "He must find her and give her back to me."

CHAPTER XXII

THE ROAD OF FREEDOM

THE carriage jolted briskly over the cobblestones. The noise of the wheels made talking impossible. Mihirmah tried to make Boyan hear but he cautioned her to silence. Pulling the bag beside her she produced a package of cakes and a small bottle of coffee from its depths. Boyan accepted them and ate ravenously.

As his appetite decreased, his hopes rose high. Suddenly he stopped, ashamed of his greed. He held the remains of the cakes, but the coffee had all disappeared, and he could only look ruefully at the empty bottle.

"You have had nothing," he said.

He had thrown the veil from his face while he ate, and though she could not hear him, she guessed the words his lips formed. She shook her head laughing, and went on winding a veil about her head in Aisha's

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most approved style, criticising it closely in the glass door of the carriage.

"I am not hungry and there are more." She patted the bag suggestively.

As the carriage turned into the lane skirting the woods the horses slowed to a walk. Mihirmah pulled a couple of shawls from under the cushions and put one over her shoulders. She made a tight bundle of the other and gave it to Boyan.

"Keep it under your cloak," she said. "It is light, but very warm, and we shall need it later."

He took it and held her hand closely in his own.

"You are wonderful," he murmured.

She flushed warmly. It was his first hint of praise and she accepted it with childish joy. She did not remove her hand and he released it of his own accord.

The grounds were wild and thick with underbrush, but the leaves had fallen and left the place barren and desolate. Mihirmah rapped on the front window of the carriage. The old eunuch stopped the horses and climbed from his seat. He stuck his head inquiringly at the door.

"The honorable *Hanoum* will walk," Mihirmah ordered. "After that she will go to the shops and then to Zulaika *Hanoum's* for dinner. You shall call for her there at four o'clock this afternoon."

She turned to follow Boyan, who was sauntering slowly ahead.

"Say, Aisha," the old man asked cautiously, "what is in your throat? Your voice is so hoarse this morning."

"Go 'long," the woman commanded crossly, " it is the frogs. They always hop into my throat in these wretched Macedonian Winters." And she hurried after her mistress.

The old eunuch shook his head. This was strange conduct and he could not understand it, but his mistress Mihirmah often did queer things. He climbed on the box and drove rapidly away, glancing back now and then at the receding figures.

"How large the *Hanoum* is getting to be," he thought.

When the carriage was out of sight, Mihirmah threw out her arms and drew a long, deep breath.

"*Bash-Komitaji,*" she cried, "we are free!"

In his suppressed joy he was almost stern. "We are a long way from freedom," he said, "but we have a fighting chance. These clothes will be in our way."

He examined the place about them. They stood in a secluded bend where the woods skirted the winding Ladna River. With a sigh of relief Boyan threw aside the veil and mantle and looked at her.

"See," Mihirmah said, "I am ready for the mountains too."

She threw off the loose cloak of the slave and waited for his comment.

BOYAN cried out in astonishment, for he saw a peasant girl before him in loose blouse, short thick skirt, woolen stockings, and heavy shoes. She laughed at his surprise.

"I got them in the market yesterday," she answered him. "I had to hurry."

"How did you think of it all?" he gasped.

"I have read much—novels, romance."

Her eyes danced with delight at his evident admiration.

"I have dreamed wild dreams. The harem games were so stupid; I wanted one worth the playing, and because I was dying of *ennui*, I sought amusement in books. I can speak your language too; I learned it from a slave-girl Murad Pasha brought us."

"*Bozhe Moi* (My God)!" he marveled. "And such a woman can come out of Turkey!"

"But hurry now," she begged.

"Mihirmah!" He spoke sternly. "I accepted your help, not because I wanted life and freedom for myself, but that I might learn how to die for others. You also crave freedom. Because the riotous blood pulses in your veins, you think you love me."

"I know I love you, *Bash-Komitaji!*"

"Well, I know I do not love you. Listen, this is brutal; but I am not a courtier and I respect you enough to tell you the truth. You are just at the gate——"

"Oh, let me be your slave, *Bash-Komitaji,*" she burst out, her passion for him undampened by the humiliation of his words. The less attainable he proved, the more ardently she desired him.

"Do you know where my path leads which you wish to follow?"

"It leads to happiness, to joy——"

"It leads to the gallows, or worse. Can freedom mean that to you? See, even yet you can turn back."

"I have cast my lot with you," she muttered.

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"And if the road proves too hard for you, and I push on nevertheless?"

"They will be after us before long. Come, do let us hurry." She stamped with nervous impatience.

Boyan shrugged his shoulders, rolled her cloak and his own trappings into a tight bundle, hunted along the bank for a stone, and tied it to one end of the long veil. Creeping to the water's edge, he flung the bundle far out into the river. It floated but an instant; they watched the circles widen and lose themselves in the current.

"There are no tracks now," he said. He picked up the bag, wrapped the shawl about it, and slung it over his shoulder. They started at a rapid pace to an old bridge some distance off. Across the bridge were the hills, forest-covered.

The wind blew cuttingly, but neither of them heeded the cold. Mihirmah felt all the energy of a mountain-peasant surging through her. She rubbed the charcoal from her face as they hurried on; her cheeks glowed through the soot. Even Murad Pasha would scarcely have known his beautiful, languid, troublesome gift-wife. And for the first time Mihirmah forgot herself and her own loveliness.

They gained the bridge and crossed it, to all appearances a young peasant couple on their way back from town. The path led sharply over the hill. They climbed rapidly, Mihirmah panting for breath. Just beyond the crest the way divided; one led toward the north, the other west.

"This way," Boyan said, turning west.

"But why not north?" Mihirmah argued. "Bulgaria lies north, and freedom is there."

"Because I say west now."

He had used that tone once before, when he had cast her aside in the palace. She followed without a word, but her heart felt sick with misgiving. She noticed suddenly how cold the wind was as it swept down the mountains.

An inability to explain to her the objective of their journey oppressed Boyan, but he could not bring himself to utter Adalena's name to this woman, and his admiration for her pluck only increased that inability. All his joy in freedom was swallowed up in his passion to reach Uskub without delay, find Adalena, and work for Macedonia. He set his teeth and hurried on.

Mihirmah watched him and followed. The whole bearing of the man ahead of her was compelling. She had dreamed of holding men captive, of molding them in the palm of her hand like soft wax; to her that had been the vision of consummate bliss.

Now she thrilled to the heart with the love of one who had trampled her pride in the dust but has seen in her a human being. She tried to fall into his own swinging stride and keep abreast, but he remained slightly ahead, and inch by inch she felt she was losing ground.

CHAPTER XXIII

"ONLY A PIASTER"

"*BASH-KOMITAJI*, listen!"

They had pushed on steadily for several long hours, with only a minute snatched now and then for rest, and a noon meal eaten as they walked. Mihirmah's muscles were stiff. The pressure of hard, heavy shoes on feet which only embroidered sandals had ever housed was unendurable.

Over and over again she was on the point of crying out in her exhaustion to hide somewhere and rest, but each time his set face and broad, grim shoulders silenced her. And she shambled on, across gullies and hollows, up winding goat-paths, over rocky defiles where every stone bruised her feet—always straight ahead and always westward.

The early zest of the journey had vanished; she followed with a determination as dogged as his own. Her limbs worked automatically. She felt no resentment at his utter disregard of her weariness, but crept after him, afraid to stop lest her feet lose the trick of keeping in his rhythm.

Slowly Mihirmah grew aware of a low beating, coming in a measured cadence, as it seemed, from somewhere back in her head. At first she enjoyed it; it helped her to walk faster.

But the rhythmic beat grew louder, louder, gaining momentum at every step until she despaired of keeping pace with it. The faster she walked the faster, more insistent came the throb that seemed to shake her very brain.

Mihirmah's apathy suddenly vanished. She turned her head and stood perfectly still. The beating did not cease; it was not in her head. *Thump, thump;* she heard it distinctly on the hard road—the unmistakable sound of galloping hoofs.

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Boyan marched steadily on, unaware of anything but the mountains in front. She ran after him, all her weariness gone.

"*Bash-Komitaji!* They are after us!"

He stopped and turned around, listening. The gallop came with increasing distinctness on the clear mountain-air. Boyan knew they were Moslem troopers; no Macedonian peasant's horse could go at that rate. His heart sickened. He looked eagerly ahead in search of some thicket or bypath that would offer concealment.

Their pursuers were evidently in the valley behind them, since the horses could scarcely keep such a gait climbing. Until the Turks reached the crest the fugitives were invisible; after that the entire road would be in plain view.

Mihirmah held his arm, watching the hilltop fascinatedly. Boyan felt her tremor as she clutched his elbow.

"You must save us both," she kept repeating. "You must save us now."

His face was grim. "We must hide, but God alone knows where."

The woods on each side were all beech and maple and oak. Their gray, gaunt limbs swayed mockingly, every protecting leaf scattered over the ground. Not a cedar or hemlock relieved the Winter bareness.

"The whole mountainside is like a sieve," Boyan groaned aloud. "They can see in every hollow clear to the valley. But come, it is our only ghost of a chance."

He took her hand and they stumbled into the thick leaves and among the bushes. Mihirmah noticed that the galloping had ceased.

"I can't hear them," she whispered. "Maybe they have turned."

"They are climbing the hill," Boyan muttered between set teeth. "Mihirmah, do you know how to die?"

"Oh!"

"Then they——"

BUT Mihirmah had lost her step; her foot slipped, turned sharply, and she fell forward into a little hollow almost filled with leaves. He reached to lift her as she struggled in the leaves, then quickly pushed her back.

"Lie still," he hissed, "and hold your shawl over your face."

Then he began piling the leaves over her, heaping, smoothing, working in a perfect frenzy.

"But you?" she cried. "Oh, don't leave me!"

"Be still!"

He threw an armful over her head.

"And don't move until I tell you."

She twisted slightly and lay quiet. Her wrenched ankle throbbed. The load over her got thicker. She held the shawl closely to keep out the stifling dust. At length the rustling stopped and something heavy and stiff fell lightly over her.

"He must be piling logs on now," she half-smiled.

An irresistible impulse drove her to discover if she could move anyway. Boyan's voice answered her first rustle, a low, hoarse, desperate voice.

"For Heaven's sake or the devil's, woman, lie still! They are at the top."

The words froze her into obedience. Her muscles grew rigid. She held her breath, so intently was she listening. Boyan's quick movements had stopped. She could still hear him move about, but slowly and haltingly, and now and then twigs snapped or one thicker than the rest broke with a slow crack.

The sharp gallop of horses drowned even this. Then all at once it too stopped, and a hoarse voice called out—

"Say, Grandpa, have you seen anything of a young couple around these parts?"

The leaves crackled rapidly. Was the *Bash-Komitaji* running away or going toward them? A voice, so thin and quavering that she had to think twice to recognize it, whined out:

"Allah multiply your wives, Effendi! One piaster, one little piaster for old Antim's dinner!"

A whip hummed. Mihirmah heard a weak cry——

"Effendi!"

"*Sst*, you old carrion, answer up this minute: have a young man and woman passed here?"

"A man and woman?" the voice whimpered in halting Turkish. "No man and woman come to hunt old Antim. Nobody comes here."

"Has any one passed, I ask you?" The Turk swore. "Has anybody gone by?"

"Gone by? Yes, yesterday Yani the shepherd, going to Goreno he said. And two old goats like me — do you know

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them?—Stilian and Petkana of Dobridol village, passed last Wednesday. Wouldn't tell me where, the old goats, and——"

"Nobody to-day?" The Turk cut him short.

"To-day is the day of Saint Nedelia; of Saint Nedelia and Saint Petka!" the cracked voice crooned in Bulgarian.

"Can't you see? He is out of his wits," another Turk yelled. "Come on, let's turn back to the valley-villages. Mihirmah *Hanoum* can not be walking in these woods; she is not used to such rough travel."

"One little piaster!" the beggar-voice whined.

"Here's one," some one sang out. Again the whirr of the whip and a cry of pain mingled with hoarse laughter.

"Warm him up. Try your shooting-eye on him as he runs!"

Instantly a rifle cracked; there was a shrill scream of anguish and something fell to the ground. Mihirmah grit her teeth to keep from crying out in her terror.

"Save your bullets, you fools," another voice shouted gruffly. "No telling how many we'll need before we are through."

The horseman galloped away.

For an eternity Mihirmah lay still. The beat of the hoofs grew fainter and fainter. Was the *Bash-Komitaji* dead? Allah, why didn't he move? She dared not stir, but every atom of her being quivered in agony and she was almost suffocated.

A twig snapped; leaves rustled above her. With a sweep her load was pushed away and Boyan kicked aside the branches he had piled over her to hold the leaves.

"Mihirmah!" he cried. His voice shook with joy. "We are saved."

SHE stared at him. His jacket was off, his shirt torn until his body was bare to the wind. His hair was gray with the dust from the leaves and his face and hands dark with grime plastered over his skin. He had rolled up his pantaloons and his feet and legs were bare and dirty. Across his face and over his right shoulder two long welts were swelling. The blood oozed out of the cuts. She sat up, still staring, uncertain whether to admire or pity.

"But the shot?" she asked anxiously.

"Your Turks are poor marksmen," he laughed, pulling on his shoes and socks. "If he had aimed at the tree instead of at me you might have had to go on alone."

She shuddered at his jest.

"I have an idea," he went on. "We shall carry bundles of fagots on our backs, then if the curs meet us, they'll think we are only wood-choppers going home."

She struggled to rise, pulling herself up by a little birch-tree. Every movement was agony. Her muscles refused to work.

Boyan was stamping up and down warming his feet. When she tried to come to him, she crumpled in a heap on the ground.

"Carry wood?" she moaned. "*Bash-Komitaji*, I can not even walk. I can not!"

He bent over her.

"Just a little farther, Mihirmah," he begged. "It is all down-hill now. We shall surely find a house where you can rest."

He helped her up and they went slowly forward. It was a snail's pace and every moment was so precious. In his nervousness Boyan increased their speed, hoping to limber her muscles.

But the Turkish *Hanoum* was no Bulgarian mountain girl. Every step was torture; her twisted ankle pressed against the shoe until she thought it would burst. Her eyes grew filmy. She lunged, face forward. He barely caught her.

"Go on," she moaned, leaning on him. "Go, and leave me. I should have known better. You call this freedom, but for me it is only death. I can not go farther."

He lifted her in his arms and went slowly down the mountainside, feeling his way carefully in the darkness.

CHAPTER XXIV

KISMET

THE wind rose. It grew colder every minute, and not a star in heaven! Thick, gray clouds, snow-filled, rolled across the sky. The road ahead lost itself in a dense-black valley.

"Are you very cold?" Boyan asked.

"I am freezing," she answered faintly. "I didn't know there were such cold winds in all the world. Can't we find a shelter somewhere?"

He strained his eyes, looking for some gleam in the darkness. The road turned sharply to the left, then bent again to the right, but, in the middle of the horseshoe curve, Boyan thought he saw an opening in

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the forest. The woods were thick here—groves of spruce and hemlock so black that the opening was like a gulf of gray yawning before them. Boyan stood Mihirmah on her feet and studied the lay of the land beyond the opening. She hobbled after, fearful of being left alone even for a moment. The endless stretch of woodland, the untamed sweep of the wind through it, filled her soul with a dread intolerable.

"We are near a shelter," Boyan said, coming to her. "Across the next ravine are the sheep-sheds of the Seven Well-Springs. We shall be welcome there."

He took her in his arms once more and started. How very light she was!

The road was scarcely more than a broad path. But it was well cleared, and the Autumn rains had washed it smooth. It wound along the mountainside, down into the dark ravine, and up the opposite slope. After a fifteen minutes' climb they came out into a well marked clearing. A group of cabins huddled together in the center of it. From a window in the largest a light gleamed, flickering but warm.

A watch-dog began barking furiously from the back of the clearing. Others joined in. A heavy log door opened carefully. Old Tosho's figure stood out in the light. Yana peered curiously over his shoulder, holding over her head a pine torch that threw out uncertain rays across the door-step and the court in front. Behind them the fireplace, filled with logs, shot its flames up the chimney.

Boyan led Mihirmah forward. When the door opened the dogs had stopped barking, but they still growled threateningly. One of them came into the light and stood there, bristling and defensive.

"Who is there?" the old shepherd called in a deep voice that showed no sign of age in spite of the bent shoulders.

"A good friend of yours, Uncle Tosho. Can you take us in for the night?"

A door opened near the fireplace. Ivan the huntsman came into the room and listened carefully.

"These are uncertain times," Tosho returned, "but you seem to know me, friend. How many are there of you?"

"Two, and one is a woman dying of cold and hunger."

"Give me the torch, mother," Ivan said. "His voice sounds familiar, and anyhow we turn away no Bulgar on such a night as this."

He stepped past the old man and swung the torch over his head.

"Come into the light. Be quiet there," he ordered the dogs, who growled more fiercely as the two approached.

"Holy thunders—you?" Ivan exclaimed. "Mother, Boyan the hermit is here! How in Heaven's—— But come in!"

HE TOOK them into the cabin and bolted the door. Boyan led Mihirmah to the fire and put her on the wide chimney-seat. She shivered continually and huddled closely to the warmth. Old Yana's curiosity gave way to pity.

"The poor little lamb," she said, "she is frozen through. In a minute we'll have something hot for you."

Mihirmah lifted her great, dark eyes to the kindly face and smiled faintly.

Yana swung a half-emptied kettle of soup nearer the fire and brought out slices of white cheese and a loaf of bread. Boyan threw himself on the seat opposite Mihirmah and rested in the warmth.

The old mother roused the two, urging the steaming soup on them and filling their glasses with fresh milk. They ate ravenously. As he gained strength, Boyan's plans cleared.

"Ivan," he began, "I know what question hangs on your lips. A month ago when I saw you last, I could not have dreamed of meeting you again—thus."

"So many things have happened since last month that one can believe anything," Ivan remarked. "But what brings you here?"

He looked inquiringly at Mihirmah.

"A brave woman is your guest, Mother Yana. Mihirmah *Hanoum* is escaped from Murad Pasha's harem in quest of freedom. She saved me out of prison, and a pack of Turkish dogs are after us."

"Saved you out of prison? When were you arrested?" Ivan cried out. "I have kept away from Goreno these days. You come direct from Goreno?"

"Yes. I am the '*Bash-Komitaji*' Murad's men have been trying so solemnly." Boyan smiled. "Even Mihirmah insists on calling me so!"

"Your Holiness a *komitaji*! Since when?" Tosho asked incredulously. Mihirmah had closed her eyes and dropped off to sleep on the chimney-seat.

"The real *Bash-Komitaji* came wounded

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to my cave after the Krividol Gulch affair," Boyan began.

"Where is she now?" Ivan interrupted.

"Wait. She honored me by seeing a possible leader in me, but I saw no fighting chance in Macedonia and preferred to keep on mumbling my prayers. Our leader went to Uskub. Hardly had she gone out of sight when a troop of *zaptiehs* came up to the cave to arrest her."

"And you gave yourself instead; played her part!" Ivan concluded admiringly.

"My trial showed me that only our indecision makes Turkey strong. United, inflexible, defiant, we could hold our own against the oppressor. And my captivity taught me not to ask God and the Virgin questions which I myself could answer. So here I am, Uskub-bound, to work with her for Macedonia's freedom."

"But this wife of Murad's? Yana asked.

"In my way? So she is, good Yana, but she has led me out of prison and I feel honor-bound to protect her as long as she can follow. She is going to Bulgaria and then to Europe, I think, where she will find the free life she craves, after she has learned that she does not really love me."

The sudden furious barking of the dogs and the gallop of horses brought them all to their feet. Rifle-shots quieted the barking for a second while loud voices yelled:

"Open up, cur of a shepherd! Open up this minute or we shoot!"

Ivan rushed to grab his rifle.

"There are a dozen of them, son. It's no use," Tosho said, and turned to the door.

As the noise burst in the room, Mihirmah leaped to her feet, frightened, and clutched Boyan by the arm. Her face stood out in the light. Selim Bey's voice rang out:

"There they are, both of them! Keep watch around the house, *zaptiehs*, the *Bash-Komitaji* is here!"

He leaped from his horse and rushed into the room with half a dozen of the Turks.

"Bind them all," he ordered, "and bind this peasant girl securely," pointing to Mihirmah.

It had all happened so quickly that the Bulgars stood dazed, but Mihirmah came forward.

"Selim Bey," she said, "you shall not bind us. And you shall not touch these peasant folk either!"

"Who are you, to give yourself such airs?" Selim shouted.

"You know who I am, even if your *zaptiehs* do not. But I tell you this: I gained access to the cell of the *Bash-Komitaji* because you wanted to learn his secret for your own profit. If you bind us, or if you touch these shepherd folk, Murad Pasha will learn some things that will cost you dearly."

Selim Bey was taken aback.

"Well," he compromised, "so be it, but come along quickly. Akiff Pasha of Uskub has sent orders to have the *Bash-Komitaji* despatched to him in the morning, or as soon as possible, and your apartment is waiting for you. Murad Pasha hasn't found out yet that either of you are gone, but he may any minute."

Tosho held back his rebellious Ivan.

"WAIT," he whispered. "Bide a better chance. Here we can not oppose them. Remember Irina and the children."

Mihirmah shrugged her shoulders. "It is *Kismet*," she said. "But my ankle is hurt. I can not manage a horse myself."

"Ride on my saddle," Selim offered eagerly.

"No." Mihirmah drew herself up proudly. "No, master of village bazaar-beauties, I'll never share a saddle with you. For once in my life I shall ride with the man who gave me the only taste of freedom I have ever had."

She turned to Boyan. Never before had the broad-shouldered, massive mountaineer seemed so little the monk and so much the born leader. His clothes, torn and dusty though they were, had a certain naive, half-wild grace which gained by contrast with Selim Bey's elaborate foppery. The stronger, simpler man was prisoner, but his failure and recapture had not cowed him.

The Pasha's son blustered importantly. Boyan said not a word. Overpowered by numbers, unarmed, he faced his captor with a cool, smiling defiance which thrilled the Turkish woman. To the unsatisfied daughter of Stamboul seraglios this son of the Pirin highland was a prince of romance.

"*Bash-Komitaji*," she said—but he seemed not to hear her—"*Bash-Komitaji*, I go to my living grave in the harem; and you—— Allah knows where! But tell Akiff Pasha—I knew him in Stamboul—tell him that the wife whom Murad Pasha got instead of the governorship of Uskub loathes the very

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sight of Murad and of his son, and loves you—you—*you!*"

She threw herself at Boyan's feet and clasped his knees in a paroxysm of unrequited passion.

IN THE early morning hours, Ivan the huntsman set out on a short cut for Uskub.

"Adalena must hear of this. She will doubtless stop at Demeter's, the oil merchant's, and she alone will know how to save Boyan before he reaches Akiff Pasha's jail." So he had reasoned, and his old parents had agreed with him.

CHAPTER XXV

THE MERCHANT FROM SALONICA

ON A TYPICAL Turkish road—a winding rope of a road, a black ditch full of sticky, ropy mud—skirting the lower western slopes of the Pirin mountains a well dressed and therefore foreign-looking young man rode on horseback, Uskub-bound. Two puffy saddlebags hugged the horse's belly, and also protected the rider's neat trouser-legs from the spattering ooze through which the animal navigated.

The road was almost deserted. The horseman met and nodded cursory greetings to several peasants returning from Istib, the nearest town on his way; but no one caught up with him.

It was somewhat late in the afternoon when, crossing the pit of a mountain hollow on his descent to the Istib valley, the young merchant overtook a moss-covered old native doing his profane best to goad a team of antediluvian buffaloes into "locomoving." The well dressed city man suppressed a smile and greeted his road fellow cheerily:

"*Pomozi Bog* (God help you)!"

It is a form of salutation characteristic of a race and country that has been in distinct and desperate need of divine assistance for some half a thousand years.

The buffalo-driver gave the horseman a sudden, startled look. Then, evidently reassured by the merchant's appearance, he bent forward hospitably.

"*Pomozi Bog!*" he answered. "Yours is a faster beast than mine," he commented, plying the goad industriously to stir the buffaloes to life, "but you are as lone a traveler as I. Whither bound?"

The merchant brought his horse alongside the cart.

"To Uskub, grandfather," he answered.

"You're a brave young chap, dressed as you are, to be traveling so far alone."

The old man peered sharply into the rich merchant's face.

"We grow old while we are yet young in Macedonia," the other replied.

The peasant gave one of the buffaloes a vicious prick and laughed bitterly.

"Macedonia has no youth. Children are graybeards before they are men. You are a Bulgar? I know it by your tongue."

"A son of the Pirin uplands," the merchant answered, "back from a visit. It was many Winters since I had seen the old hut."

"Are you a peasant born?" The old man was incredulous. "You look so prosperous—moneyed—polished."

He surveyed the evolved village son admiringly.

"You must be a Protestant," he concluded, but crossed himself Orthodox-wise notwithstanding. "Tie your horse to the wagon and ride a ways."

"You must excuse me, grandfather, but I am late as it is," the merchant replied. "I must reach Istib before sundown."

He lifted his cap, touched the spurs to his horse, and vanished around the next bend.

"The young ones are restless these days," the peasant mused. "There is no time to talk any more."

He pricked the off buffalo, who seemed to be slower in responding to the goad's suggestion, and blew his nose loudly.

"But he was a handsome youngster," he added, "almost as pretty as a maid."

The rider reached the top of the last upland slope. He rested the horse from the long climb; then took the descent to Istib at a quick trot and alighted before an inn at the edge of the town.

AN OFFICIOUS porter, followed by an obsequious host, hustled out of the gate. The merchant nodded to a stableboy, who loafed expectantly about the courtyard, and walked briskly into the dingy office. The boy almost hurried in his zeal to stable the fine gentleman's horse; the porter lugged in the saddlebags.

"I want a good, clean, warm room, if you have such," the merchant told the landlord.

"Yes, sir, yes." Doncho the innkeeper

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rubbed his hands importantly. "Tasko, put my own room in shape for the guest."

Such customers as the merchant were obviously not usual at Doncho's inn.

"You are traveling from afar, sir?"

"From Salonica." The curt answer discouraged further conversation.

"Landlord, send three fried eggs up to my room. I don't care to eat with this rabble."

He jerked his gloved thumb scornfully toward the eating-room, reeking with tobacco smoke and noisy with the clatter of unbreakable wine glasses.

"Indeed not." The host echoed his patron's aristocracy. "All shall be made comfortable for the gentleman."

"A heavy merchant that," suggested a town idler, straining his wine through his mustaches, while he watched the city man stride up the stairs to his room.

Tasko had just started the fire in the little tin stove, and was bobbing his way out, when the landlord entered.

"The gentleman will pardon my disturbing him," he began, "but it is necessary for me to record his passport."

"To be sure. Stupid of me to forget."

The merchant went through his papers, selected one, and handed it to the landlord.

"Send some supper at once," he said.

Early in the evening the light in the front chamber was out and the young merchant, fully dressed, slept soundly behind a locked door. Nothing disturbed his slumbers; it was six o'clock when he wakened. He pounded at his door and called for breakfast.

"And tell the boy to feed and saddle my horse at once," he ordered the porter. "I must be off directly."

But instead of Tasko, Doncho himself returned, profuse with apologies.

"I am sorry to say, *Guspodine*, that something seems wrong. The town *kaimakam*, Midhat Bey, will not accept your passport and has sent a *zaptieh* to take you to him."

"Oh bother!" the merchant snapped in irritation. "How can things be right when half these town *kaimakams* don't attend to their business! Where is the *zaptieh?* I'm in seven devils of a hurry."

The landlord shook his head sympathetically as the city man strode away with the orderly.

The Government *konak* at Istib was old and dingy, but its disorder was that of use rather than neglect. In other days the low, square audience room had been fitted up with some pretense at luxury, and the former county magistrates served coffee to their early morning guests on low tables and smoked lazily as they swapped local gossip.

Midhat Bey had changed things completely. He was a short, swarthy Arab with keen, deep-set eyes and a chin as square as a bulldog's. His temper was also of the bulldog variety. He dressed plainly, even carelessly, scorning luxury of any kind. He had one absorbing passion, a passion outlandish in Turkey—the fulfilment of his duties.

To be sure, Midhat was ambitious, and it may have been that while he attended to business with one watchful eye, the other was fixed on the governorship of Uskub, that goal of all Turkish officialdom in northern Macedonia. Still, the first eye kept the Istib District in better order than that which obtains in most of the Sultan's mismanaged provinces.

When he came into power, one of his first acts was to sweep away all the frippery of his predecessors. The artistic coffee tables were replaced by rough desks, littered with papers; the divans by wooden benches, where Midhat's callers waited his leisure in uncomfortable, coffeeless silence. And they never had long to wait.

ONLY one person had ever succeeded in breaking down these strictly business arrangements. The Istib Doctor, the only medico in the town, genial, self-confident, wise in his own profession, always drank his morning coffee in the *konak* courtroom. He had once dragged Midhat Bey from the verge of a nervous collapse, and after the *kaimakam* recovered the Doctor still came before beginning his morning visits, drank coffee, and listened to the administering of justice.

He was there that morning, sipping noisily at his corner table, and nodding encouragement to a row of country and town offenders, ranged on a bench along the outer wall, when the young merchant entered. He watched the newcomer with interest and listened intently to his examination.

When the stranger was announced, Midhat Bey pushed his papers aside and looked up scowling.

"Is this your passport?"

He shoved the paper forward.

The merchant glanced at it.

"It is," he said.

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"And—you've come from Salonica?"

The *kaimakam* watched him closely as he answered.

"I started from there, came north to Seres, as you can see, then on in this direction."

"Where are you going?"

"To Uskub, on business for the Salonica firm I represent. I have been detained now longer than I expected and shall be late for my appointment unless I make all speed from here."

"Not so fast, please," Midhat growled. "If you were in such a hurry, why didn't you go by the railroad straight to Uskub?"

"There was business to be transacted in the towns along the road. I carry samples of our goods in my saddlebags and solicit custom on the way."

"Very well," Midhat muttered, "but now the trouble is just this: You say you came along the road from Seres. Then you must have passed through Demir-Hissar, Petrovich, and Radovich, anyway. Yet this passport has not been countersigned since you left Seres."

"You are quite right, Midhat Bey," the merchant answered readily, "and I must tell you that in no other town have I found an administration of official matters so careful as yours. When I was at Demir-Hissar I stayed at the home of my uncle, but at Petrovich the *kaimakam* was so drunk I could get no attention at all. My business is important and urgent. I waited another night and demanded my passport. An under officer threw it at me and told me to clear out.

"At Radovich I hoped for better fortune and presented my passport at the *konak* in person, but the *kaimakam* was not at home. The next morning he was sleeping and refused to see any one before noon. I could not delay, and rode on. I have stopped nowhere since leaving Radovich."

The *kaimakam* swore under his breath.

"The old story. It is the same everywhere. We are a slovenly race, and any old rascal could slip through our fingers."

He turned to the merchant.

"Your story is not impossible," he admitted. "But my duty is to see that every passport has been properly countersigned. You must wait in Istib until I have made inquiries about you at Salonica."

"But, Effendi," the merchant objected, "I am no goatherd, who can spend three months in jail while his passport is being examined from here to Constantinople. My business allows of no delay. I represent Stuart, Prince & Co., a large American firm in Salonica, and it is absolutely necessary that I be in Uskub by to-night."

The doctor gulped his last swallow of coffee and sauntered up.

"There is something in what the gentleman says, Midhat Bey," he suggested. "It doesn't do to tamper too much with those big American firms. They can't understand our Ottoman ways, get red-peppery at the least annoyance, and send telegrams to their ambassador at Constantinople. They think they own the country, and they can make other people believe it too. I knew a *kaimakam* out Monastir way that got into a deuce of a mess because he meddled with the representative of an American company."

MIDHAT BEY'S chin squared; he set his teeth hard.

"Well," he gave in grudgingly, "I won't keep you here. Cardash Effendi takes a gang of rascals up to Uskub tomorrow, and you may go with them. Akiff Pasha can get you out of your scrape if he wants to."

"But I must be off to-day, *Kaimakam!*" the merchant insisted.

Midhat Bey thundered: "To-morrow! *Zaptieh*, take him out."

The Salonican wheeled about and started for the door.

"And mind you don't try skipping by yourself!" the *kaimakam* called after him. "Every door in Istib has eyes and ears and—hands."

The merchant closed the door in haughty silence. He maintained the same dignity until he locked the door of his room and made sure he was alone. Then he emptied one of the saddlebags and looked carefully over a bundle of papers which he extracted from amidst his cloth samples. In the collection of six or seven passports which he carried, he was variously described as an American missionary-lady, a pedler of laces, a peasant from Nevrokopsko, a dealer in oils and paints, an exarchist teacher, and a Turkish military inspector traveling *incognito*.

The youth yawned and studied his reflection in the mirror. His hands fumbled for a while in the fluffy brown hair that

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came close to his ears. The wig loosened and fell to the floor. Two long, black, tightly plaited braids streamed down—and Adalena smiled at herself in the mirror.

"An American missionary-lady on a visit to the Uskub District!" she mused, combing out her hair. "It will be strange to pass for a woman after having played the man for so long."

She concealed the American missionary-lady's passport in a secret pocket of her coat. The other six went into the stove.

Readjusting the brown wig, she strolled to an eastern window, and stared long and wistfully at the Pirin Mountains that loomed elusive in the distance.

"I wonder—— Is he too as utterly alone as I?" she murmured.

CHAPTER XXVI

USKUB-BOUND

THE next morning a motley cavalcade rode out of Istib, headed by Cardash Effendi, an Armenian converted to the Mohammedan faith for value received. Adalena, in her carefully appointed merchant's costume, rode at his side, morose and vexed. Directly behind, half a dozen peasants from the country around jolted along on bare muleback, chained together and guarded by a foul-mouthed, boisterous escort of Albanian *zaptiehs*.

"You can see for yourself, Effendi," Adalena explained at the start, "that a heavy merchant like myself can not be corralled with that herd. I shall not need close watching. I have nothing to fear in Uskub."

A silver medjidieh, casually slipped into Cardash Effendi's expectant hand, completed the explanation. It really was not a bribe, in the bald vernacular of more sophisticated races. The coin served the combined purpose of an introduction and a reference. Had it been a copper gologan, Cardash Effendi would have known in a minute that his prisoner was a stingy, everyday rascal, parading as an aristocrat, and would have treated him accordingly. Had the coin been a gold lira, the Armenian would have suspected immediately the sort of prisoner who offered to a mere head *zaptieh* what only *kaimakams* and pashas have a right to expect from those in their power, and the bribe, if bribe it was, would have defeated its purpose.

Adalena knew Turkish officialdom and its current rates. A silver medjidieh was the expected and rational *bakshish* (present) to introduce her to her imposed escort. Cardash Effendi, of course, did not acknowledge the gift; it would have been contrary to Ottoman etiquette and in utterly bad taste. But he nodded affably, and the Salonica merchant rode at his side at the head of the procession, a fellow traveler instead of a prisoner.

She maintained a dignified silence, however, as behooved a heavy, moneyed merchant, and Cardash Effendi was made to feel honored in riding alongside the Salonican. The first half of the morning wore on in comparative silence.

At about ten o'clock they approached a wayside inn.

"Hey there, how much do you have in your pouch?" a *zaptieh* called.

"Not a piaster," another answered in true Albanian style. "But I have a dying thirst in my inwards which I'm going to revive. Ha! Ha!" It was obviously one of his favorite jests. "This innkeeper is a Bulgar; why pay him?"

The heavy merchant turned to his companion.

"If the men are thirsty, Effendi, I'll see they have something to satisfy them."

The guard looked at him in surprise. Then he called out:

"Ho, stop, all of you! The noble merchant here says he will pay for the drinks."

The Albanians tumbled from their horses and fought for first entrance at the door, shouting out their orders. The peasants looked on thirstily.

The Salonican turned to his escort.

"You too must be dry, Effendi, and a long ride is ahead."

They went together into the inn. Cardash drank sparingly. The merchant ordered tea.

"Against the rules of the firm to have anything stronger when on business bent," he explained to Cardash. "But here," he called to the innkeeper, "give these fellows something hot."

The Albanians shouted boisterous assent and gulped their portions of brandy.

"A drink all 'round to those poor fellows tied on the mules, too," the Salonican added.

Cardash looked at him in wonder.

"The *Chorbadji* must have a bottomless bag," he said enviously.

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"Not with me." The other smiled meaningly. "But we reach Uskub to-night."

THEY clambered on their horses and proceeded at a brisk pace. The spirits of the entire party seemed to rise with the drinks. The merchant and Cardash Effendi waxed talkative.

"Do you have a large family?"

Cardash shook his head.

"Oh, not so large as it might be, but Allah has been merciful."

"How many children?"

"Five—and two daughters. You see," he explained, "we *zaptiehs* have to live on the blue sky if we attach more than one wife. I haven't had any pay for the last six months. If it were not for the peasants' crops and stock, this would be a hard Winter for us. But—we get along!"

"Have you seen much service?"

"I fought in Asia Minor first. Then I was promoted and sent to Bulgaria when the Russians came down to fight the Sultan. I was in that deuce of a battle at the Shipka Pass, where a herd of Bulgar milkmen kept Suleiman Pasha's whole army at bay. They were above us in a narrow gulch, and when their bullets gave out, they hurled rocks and logs and corpses at us, and held us too, the cursed dogs, until the Russians arrived and rolled us back. Because of that defeat I was sent out here, and—here I stay, a *zaptieh!*"

The merchant nodded sympathetically, and neither spoke again until they stopped at a cross-roads tavern for dinner. Wine-jugs were ranged temptingly on the window-sill and a gander rampant added a touch of individuality to the aged signboard, swaying and creaking in front of the gate.

Cardash rode to the door of the tavern and pounded lustily. The landlord stuck his tousled head out of the window.

"Feed them," ordered the officer, pointing to the soldiers, "and be quick about it."

The innkeeper asked no questions, but scuttled toward the kitchen, driving before him his only helper, a loose-jointed, shriveled lad of twelve. Adalena drew up her horse at the *zaptieh's* side.

"You will be my guest at dinner, Effendi? Certainly you do not expect to share with such a rabble."

"You are generous, *Chorbadji*," Cardash answered, and the merchant hurried away to give the order.

"Take a round of soup to the ones outside," she said, "and add plenty of bread. I am paying for this."

A significant touch on the merchant's pouch, and the landlord nodded assent.

An old rattle-jaw of a hostler, he moved about stealthily, timorously, as if afraid of some one at his back. His eyes roved here and there seeking a safe place to rest on. His toothless mouth worked in an incessant effort to express the idea which forever eluded him. Some tempest seemed to have swept over him, body and soul. Even his white hair waved timidly in the wind.

His whole being bespoke a deferential plea that he be allowed to breathe a few moments longer. Only now and then an angry gleam shot out of the colorless, lashless eyes, which made one wonder what depths of vindictiveness welled up beneath the deferential form of the innkeeper.

Adalena knew him. Ivko was the only man in the immediate vicinity who belonged to the revolutionary organization. That he did not recognize her was proof positive of the success of her disguise. She had meant to stop at his inn; now she could ill afford to reveal herself.

"You are a Bulgar?" Ivko whispered with a look of sympathy.

Cardash Effendi drew near; the merchant turned away without answering and took a seat at a corner table. The Armenian sat opposite and gulped his dinner greedily. Adalena studied the soldiers.

"They have nothing to drink! Landlord," she cried in rebuke, "give them something warm and don't have it too thin."

She looked squarely into his eyes. The innkeeper squinted understandingly. Her tone had been loud. The soldiers looked around.

"Come on with it, you lazy tortoise," an Albanian bawled, banging on the table with an iron spoon. "Bring a tankful."

"They ought not to have it," Cardash said in disapproval. "But this is their touch of your European civilization. They will be like hogs by nightfall, especially that barrely one with the twisted mustache. Faik is his name—an Arnaut wolf when he is sober, an Albanian pig when he loads up.

"You are not an Albanian? Of course not. I mean no harm anyway. Albanians are strong, healthy animals, faithful beasts if they like you. But Allah preserve you if they smell your blood! I have to humor

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my pack, and these are like shepherd dogs, all but Faik. He will die a wolf-pig."

"Oh, nothing in this place to hurt them," the merchant replied.

They ate on in silence.

"EFFENDI," the merchant said as they pushed back their coffee cups, "the air will be getting chilly later in the afternoon, and I left my neckerchief in Istib. I noticed a little shop across the road. Would you care to step over and see what I could buy there?"

They started for the door. Adalena lingered slightly behind. As she passed Faik, she slipped a coin on to the table beside him.

"Another glass, *zaptieh*," she muttered.

The Arnaut's hand clapped over the money.

"Another glass," he roared at the landlord. Cardash turned around. The merchant passed as if he had heard nothing.

The neckerchief was a quick bargain, but the young Bulgar lingered, looking at the rolls of bright woolens with the eyes of a connoisseur.

"I gathered from your talk, Effendi, that things might be pleasanter at home," the merchant said.

He picked up a piece of dress goods and examined it closely.

"It is because there is no money," Cardash answered. "The peasants have wheat, meat, but no money. Where is one to get it? Are you ready, *Chorbadji*?"

"Why don't you take your wife a present this time?"

The Salonican was dangling the bright plaid, holding it up to the light.

"Here is a beauty."

"I can not buy presents."

The merchant still held the fabric, examining the threads. At length he rolled it up and tossed it to the shopkeeper.

"Tie it up for the Effendi," he said. "There should be cheer in the home."

The Armenian's eyes glistened.

"You are more than generous, *Chorbadji*," he said. "She has had no such dress since the wedding."

The *Chorbadji* waved aside his thanks and went to look after his horse.

The road, west from the inn, avoided the village and followed the zigzaggy course of the Bistra River, a mad, tortuous current, spilling over the road-bed on its south bank and flooding the lowlands where it could not beat its way against the rocky terraces which hemmed it on the north. It was a wild stream, bridgeless and quite unfordable, except after a protracted drought. A bridge across it would have saved the traveler to Uskub several hours. But time is cheap in Macedonia, and the Turks followed the turns and bends of the Bistra.

The cold snap had clutched the restless water on both banks. The dark current coursed angrily between the two eager sheets of ice that neared each other hour by hour. A squirrel could have leaped the gap that still intervened, but Cardash Effendi was no squirrel. He rode sullenly on, blowing lustily to keep his nose warm and cursing his *zaptiehs* and prisoners for being so slow.

It was twilight when the party rode into Uskub. A blistering cold wind blew down from the hills. The peasants chattered their teeth and groaned in chorus, their limbs aching with stiffness and cold, until Faik slashed out at them with his riding whip.

The gay windows of a tavern shone across the city square.

"Is the Pasha's palace here?" the merchant inquired.

"No," Cardash answered. "We have about ten minutes more to ride."

"We go directly there, then?"

"We do."

The Salonican looked himself over carefully.

"As I have told you before, Effendi," he said, "I represent one of the largest and most prominent firms in all Turkey. The day's ride has been long and I am disheveled and dirty. I should esteem it a great favor, and my firm would also appreciate it, if I had a chance to clean away some of the dust of travel before appearing at Akiff Pasha's palace."

Cardash shook his head.

"I am sorry," he said, "but it will be impossible, *Chorbadji*. I haven't a minute to lose unless I want to have these pigs on my hands all night."

He nodded toward the prisoners.

"I understand," the merchant replied. "Yet I must make a good impression on the Pasha. If I could stop for just fifteen minutes at the tavern there——"

He rode closely at the Armenian's side and tapped the back of his hand with something hard and round and shining.

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"You could leave one of the others to guard me, say that hawk-eyed Faik. We would be at the palace almost as soon as yourself."

CARDASH EFFENDI'S hand turned and deposited the money in his pocket. It was a gold lira this time, but the favor asked was also considerable.

"All right," he said slowly, and called to Faik. "I don't envy you your watch-dog, though. He is the sharpest and meanest in the pack."

The Uskub tavern was more pretentious than the one at Istib. A stable-boy hustled out for the horses.

"Feed them in a hurry," the merchant ordered. "We must be off in fifteen minutes."

The boy stared curiously at the strange pair—the erect, carefully dressed merchant, the slouchy, goose-stepping Albanian. Paying no heed to him, however, they entered the tavern. Fumes of tobacco and wine and coffee welcomed them to the crowd of evening loafers. Faik sniffed thirstily.

"I'll get a room and clean up," the merchant said, slipping a generous coin into the *zaptieh's* hand. "Better get you a square meal and plenty to drink while you wait."

The Albanian looked at his charge gruffly. But he was famishing and thirsty, and a door, opened just then from the kitchen, let out thick clouds of steam heavy with the odor of beef and garlic. A *zaptieh* in uniform banged his glass on the table and shouted:

"By my boot-straps, there is Faik himself! Swinging pretty high, aren't you?"

"Go on, then," the Albanian muttered under his breath. "But see that you're back in fifteen minutes."

The ancient clock above the tavern counter had ticked out seven uncertain minutes and Faik was draining glass after glass, when a slender figure in a long coat, head muffled in a neckerchief, slipped down the stairs, through the room, dim with the smoke of flickering, smelly oil lamps, and disappeared in the dark, twisty, narrow alleys of Uskub.

An hour or so later, Cardash Effendi with several other officers rushed into the tavern and jerked the drunken, reeling *zaptieh* to his senses. Faik rubbed his eyes and leered about stupidly. He had a dim recollection of guarding some one, he wasn't sure whom, and grabbed Cardash by the throat.

"Let go, you hound," the Effendi gurgled, throwing him off. "Where is that Salonica merchant?"

Faik toppled backward, struck a chair, and fell leaden to the floor. Cardash kicked him aside.

"Search the tavern," he shouted.

The room was in an uproar. Tables toppled over. The Bulgarian merrymakers melted away in the night. No trace was found of the missing merchant.

A trembling hand touched Cardash Effendi's hand. The stable-boy whispered nervously—

"The *Chorbadji's* horse—it is here, and the saddlebags."

Cardash followed him on a run to the stable. In the dingy, flickering light of a lantern, they spilled the contents of the bags over the floor. A pile of innocent-looking cloth samples was all they found.

"If he was a real merchant, why should he run away?" Cardash cursed.

"I think you have let a revolutionary slip through your fingers," a Turk remarked. "He gave you a lira, you say?" this last in a confidential whisper. "He must be an important rascal!"

"Well, I am sorry for him if he thinks he can hide in Uskub, the slippery eel! I'm going to the Pasha this minute, and if he doesn't hang by his heels in jail to-morrow morning, Cardash is a ninnyhammer."

DEMETER, ostensibly seller of olive oil and fruit, in reality chairman of the Uskub Division of the Macedonian Revolutionary Committee, was having a jolly game of backgammon in his shop on the opposite side of the city. A lad came up quietly and touched him on the shoulder.

"A guest at your home, Demeter," he said.

CHAPTER XXVII

A CRUSADE OF TO-MORROW

"I DON'T know who he is," Demeter's wife whispered as he came into the kitchen and inquired for his guest. "The door was open; he rushed in out of breath

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and told me to call you at once, but not to whisper a word to any one else about his coming. He is very young and quiet. I put him in the loft, and he hasn't stirred since."

Demeter climbed to the loft, candle in hand. The garret stretched over the entire house, its cobwebby gloom relieved only by two dusty dormer windows at the front and back. It was unplastered and unfurnished, a low dingy storeroom and catch-all for every cast-off possession or precious heirloom of the family.

Demeter held his candle above his head and peered about uncertainly, his body but half projecting through the trap door that opened in the floor. A mouse scuttled away before the light, but there was no other sound. Demeter could see only the dim shapes of old chests, a discarded bedstead, and some antique mattresses. He mounted a step higher on the ladder.

"My friend," he said aloud, "I am Demeter Nikoloff."

A shadow moved out of the darkness.

"And I, comrade," a girl's voice answered, "am Adalena Andreyeva. I have just escaped from the Turks as a merchant from Salonica. I shall need to change my disguise at once."

The trap door slammed behind Demeter. The candle went out with the rush of air and fell from his hand. He grasped the girl's outstretched palm in both his own, shaking it madly.

"You have escaped once more! Oh, what a woman! And we had given you up for lost. Our hope still lives then. We have been burning candles for the dead. Tonight we shall double the number, rejoicing over the living."

"Does news travel so swiftly in Macedonia?" Adalena said wonderingly. "How could you know I was captured?"

"We weren't sure, of course, but I knew how often you traveled as a monk, and we heard some days ago that the *Bash-Komitaji*, posing as a monk, had been captured in the Pirin highlands near Goreno and was to be brought here to Akiff Pasha. We trembled, fearing it must be you, and despaired of our plans to save you, because we knew you would never let yourself really fall into the hands of the Turks alive."

Adalena stood paralyzed.

"What are you saying, Demeter? I was not captured as a monk near Goreno, but only escorted from Istib in this merchant's costume. Tell me, what is wrong in Goreno?"

"Dobry the iconograph blew up the house of Stavry the money-lender, and killed Stavry and some *zaptiehs*, but lost his own life. But the *Bash-Komitaji*, if not you—— Then who can this monk be?" Demeter puzzled. "Why—Adalena!"

Demeter stopped in amazement. The girl's face was buried in her hands. She shook convulsively.

"Great God, have mercy!" she sobbed. "What have I done!"

He tried in vain to rouse her. She was deaf to his pleading. The whole miserable truth was slowly dawning upon her.

"Dobry gone! And Boyan—my brave hermit lad! You did it all for me; and—I scorned you for a coward."

In despair, Demeter staggered down to his wife.

"Put a dress on her," he said, "and burn those things she has on. The Turks will be turning all Uskub upside down before long."

Some time later a pale, listless girl followed good mother Nedda down the ladder. She crept shivering to the open fire in the kitchen and watched apathetically as Demeter burned her merchant finery. The whole world seemed suddenly to have slipped from under her feet.

When her host spoke, she stared at him vacantly, struggling to catch his words, and sank back before he had finished, shaking her head in despair. Demeter lost his patience.

"Adalena," he said sternly, "you must rouse yourself at once. Get your passport; any moment may bring the *zaptiehs* here looking for their merchant, and what will become of Nedda and me then?"

His words had their effect. She straightened up. The dazed look left her eyes. Only her tense lips and bloodless face told that she was suffering.

I took it out of my merchant's clothes when I changed into this dress, and put it into my bag," she said. "I've left that in the loft. Give me a candle. I shall bring it."

"I'll carry the light," Nedda said gently. "Your hand is too trembly, little one. And then you must have some supper. We are all hungry and may need our strength afore morning."

"Mother, we should keep Adalena here

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with us," Demeter said kindly as they sat at supper. "Two old crows like us, with their fledgings flown, need a younger——"

Some one kicked violently at the gate. The three started to their feet.

"Your passport?" Demeter whispered hoarsely.

"On the shelf."

"You are——"

"An American missionary from Monastir, on a visit to the Uskub District."

DEMETER nodded and unbolted the door. Half a dozen rough *zaptiehs* pushed in.

"Search the place," the leader called. "Here, who is this?"

He turned to Adalena.

"An American missionary-lady from Monastir, Effendi," Demeter answered. "She has just arrived this evening by train. May I ask the reason for this intrusion?"

"If we find what we want, you'll know soon enough," the Turk snarled. "If we don't, you don't need to know. Where is her passport?"

Demeter handed it over. The Turk frowned at it, held it upside down, studied the foreign-looking, near-American seal, and grumbled assent.

"Better take it to the *konak* and be quick about it," he growled.

"I shall—immediately," Demeter answered.

They could hear the soldiers tossing the furniture about in the other rooms.

"Bring a light here, old woman," one of them called from the top of the loft steps.

Nedda started to obey, but Demeter snatched the candle from her.

"Sit down!" he muttered fiercely, and followed the soldiers.

Boxes were hurled about, chests thrown over. The house trembled with the clatter and resounded with the disappointed oaths of the soldiers.

"Nothing here, Effendi," they said, coming down. "The fox has found another hole."

Two of them lingered long enough to gulp the soup and snatch the silver candlestick that stood before an icon in the corner. Then, with a leer at the girl by the wall, they followed the others.

Demeter bolted the door and stood with clenched fists listening to the uproar in his neighbor's house. Nedda cowered in a nook, choking back her tears, her eyes riveted on her husband. Adalena gripped the back of her chair, rigid.

As the noise of the soldiers died away, Demeter sank in his chair and leaned his head on his hand. The apathy of utter despair was in his face and voice.

"And this story is five hundred years old," he groaned. "It will be five hundred years older, if we last that long."

"No, Demeter, no!" the girl cried. "It can not last."

"Who will prevent it? We have tried. We have fought. What is the use?"

It reminded the girl of what another had said. She quivered and was long silent. Then she raised her head, her eyes glowing in the firelight.

"Helpless we are, alone. At last I recognize it, Demeter. But help will come."

"From where?" Nedda put in. "Manna from the blue sky? Those are only old nunnery tales!"

"So they are, Nedda," Demeter agreed. "What good did even your holy icon do us? We've lost our candlestick in the bargain."

"Russia and Austria have worked out a plan of reform, I hear," Adalena remarked.

"So an Austrian here in Uskub told me last month. And do you know what he added?"

Demeter laughed bitterly.

"He said Turkey was a sick man who will not die until Austria is ready to bury him in her own back yard."

"America——" Adalena began. But the theme was obviously an old one for Demeter.

"America!" he interrupted. "She sends us missionaries to save our souls from Satan. Why doesn't she first save our daughters from the Turk? Preach the Kingdom of Heaven in this Mohammedan hell! Oh, leave America alone!"

MEMORIES of her struggle with Boyan the hermit flooded Adalena's mind. "In Bulgaria and Servia our kinsmen are free," she argued. "I remember seeing valiant soldiery in Sofia and in Belgrade."

"And what are their consuls doing here in Uskub? Snarling at each other. And anyway, what could Bulgaria do against the might of Islam? Adalena, as I looked helpless at those beasts ravaging my home, it seemed to me that all struggle was vain, futile."

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Again a silence ensued. At last Adalena bent forward across the table, her eyes burning earnestly before the apathetic face of the Uskub man.

"Bulgaria alone can do little; Servia nothing at all. But together, Demeter—think! Allied together! What if Balkandom would all join, strike one united blow!"

"Greece, Montenegro?"

"Yes. Why not? Have we not suffered long enough through our mutual jealousies? Turkey is rotten, Demeter. Balkandom could crush her to dust and we would be free. All Macedonia—Thrace—free!"

For a moment the man caught her vision. His face kindled.

"Then! Then!" he exclaimed jubilantly, his eyes afire. But the light died out.

"Adalena, dear girl, the day for miracles is past. Greek, Serb, and Bulgar were at each other's throats long before the Turk appeared. Such an alliance—you are dreaming."

"What if a strong man were to be found to preach such a crusade, Demeter?"

Her voice trembled slightly.

"It is not my idea. A brave man, one who could have preached such a crusade, told it to me—Boyan, the hermit monk, who is coming to Uskub in chains at the order of Akiff Pasha."

"You know him then?"

"I left him just before his capture. They came for me. He must have given himself in my stead," Adalena said quietly.

Husband and wife exchanged comprehending glances, but said not a word.

IT MUST have been near midnight. Demeter and Nedda slept soundly, but into their slumbers a persistent tapping finally penetrated.

"Nedda! Demeter! some one is knocking at the gate."

"Yes, Adalena, just one minute." The old people strained their ears, listening.

Tap-tap-tap—*tap*, it came insistently, three short knocks and one long one. Then again tap-tap-tap—*tap*.

"It is a comrade's signal, Nedda. Where's my coat?"

Demeter hustled into his clothes and opened the gate. Ivan the huntsman rushed in, shivering with cold.

"Is Adalena here?" he asked hurriedly, as Demeter shot the bolt into its socket.

"Yes. What news?"

"Let me see Adalena."

They found her in the kitchen, fully dressed as they had left her before retiring. She sprang forward eagerly as she caught sight of Tosho's son.

"You bring tidings from Goreno?"

"Boyan the hermit was captured, the Turks mistaking him for you. He played the part of the *Bash-Komitaji* valiantly, and almost escaped, but was recaptured at our hut and is now to be sent hither under strong guard, led by Selim Bey."

Adalena dug her nails into her palms.

"If he is brought here, nothing can save him from Akiff Pasha's clutches."

"We could organize a band of Uskub boys," Demeter began.

"No, violence won't do. The Turks will kill him before giving him up."

She thought a while.

"Listen," she burst out, "do you know Irko's Inn near Poosty, on the road from Istib here?"

"That old toothless fellow?" Demeter asked.

"Yes. He has lost his wife and three children in Turkish raids. He is the only man I can trust on the high road from Goreno to Uskub. Selim Bey will be sure to stop overnight at his inn, so as to make a triumphal entry into Uskub in broad daylight. We must go to Ivko's Inn, Ivan, just the two of us and bide their coming. I—I have a plan. Demeter, the meeting of the District leaders will have to be postponed. Get us a couple of horses ready. We must be off before dawn."

CHAPTER XXVIII

AN OLD SONG

MURAD PASHA'S trial of the monk-rebel had proved an utter fiasco, and now his prize was about to slip through his fingers. He cursed himself for his boasting. He cursed the envy of Akiff Pasha. But Akiff of Uskub was *Vali* of the whole Kossovo *Vilayet*. He wished to try the hermit himself; and his word was law in Goreno. The *Bash-Komitaji* was to go to Uskub under heavy guard.

The Pasha of Goreno felt tricked, thwarted, humiliated. He saw the condescending smile of his son Selim, he could hear him speak about town of the "old graybeard," the "soft moldy-head."

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He could hear suppressed laughter in his own harem. He fancied that Mihirmah, whom he had not seen for several days, sneered at him in the sitting-room that afternoon. He caught the look of pity in the eyes of the local Turkish dignitaries; and, worse, sympathy in the faces of his own friends. Murad Pasha ached to get even with the rebel who had checkmated him by sheer haughty defiance, perhaps by sheer bravado.

It was Mirko who added the last straw to the camel. The Pasha of Goreno was crossing the square—bent, morose, his look as chilly as the wintry weather. A trio of youngsters walked in front of him, utterly unaware of his presence. The two smaller ones were listening intently to the wise-sounding discourse of the third.

"Pride of the Vardar, you say? Pshaw! Why our Pasha is getting to be a stupid old dodderhead; his head is just like a big frozen potato. The big Pasha at Uskub was so disgusted with our Pasha that he has ordered him to send the monk to Uskub right away. And if my big brother Dobry had not exploded——"

"*Sst*, you dirty little warts. Off with you or I'll toast you alive on a brazier!"

Yelling in terror, Mirko and his chums fled in all directions. But their words stuck in Murad's mind.

"Soft-head, dodderhead, big frozen potato!" he muttered. "I'll teach them all how Murad Pasha can handle them when his fingernails start itching. Hey there, you Armenian snail-foot," he yelled at a *zaptieh* guard, "tell Tossun Effendi to see me in the council room inside of half an hour."

That morning Goreno's manhood and womanhood were weighed in the balances against Murad's humbled pride—and were found wanting.

"Bring me a sackful of noses here tomorrow. You know what I mean, Tossun?"

Tossun knew.

DO THE blood-charactered, fire-illumined chronicle of carnage, fire and *yataghan*, rapine and pillage, sack and bloodthirst and bestiality—have you read it, O Friend of the Sleepy Veranda? Can you copy it in seemly type that would not outrage your decorous respectability? Paraphrase and translate it into a language of Thousand-and-One-Night Romance, stressing the Orientalism, smoothing, skipping, scratching out the syllables of shame, the loathsome words, the paragraphs of things unutterable?

In the cellar of Murad's palace, sixty-year-old Uncle Dimo hung down from a cross-beam, an iron chain gripping his bare ankles. The old worn body hung limp, the tired blood stained the emaciated cheeks, and the tongue stuck out of the mouth in hopeless agony. A sixteen-year-old Turkish rascal had tied his hands in a noose and swung him back and forth by means of a rope. The head just scraped the floor where the crafty young devil had poured pine tar; the matted hair caught, pulled, stuck.

"Who pecked Murad Pasha's money, you old gander?" the Turkish boy jeered, and jerked the rope the harder.

Gani, the wagon-driver, lay stripped to the skin on an iron stretcher over a slow-glowing charcoal brazier. The rawhide whip snapped as it fell and broke the blisters. The teamster shrieked out his loyalty in loud agony, but the blows descended.

"Where is Murad's money, you leprous hypocrite?"

Splinters hammered under fingernails and toenails; gunpowder shaken in the eyes and set ablaze; boiling hot olive oil poured down bleeding ears; noses chopped off and eyes gouged out; little Mirko's teeth twisted and twisted and broken one by one with heavy pincers——

"Who came to your brother's meetings, you cursed pup?"

And the brave lad swallowed hard, gasping—but dumb as a fish. He had no brother to save now.

In the palace chambers above, Murad Pasha presided over a wanton carnival. Glasses clinked. Plates rattled. The halls rang with the vile ribaldry, drowning the shrieks of victims killed and worse than killed.

Murad Pasha beamed bestial triumph. He lingered to observe more closely. He looked out of the window. Fire and sword had done their work in thorough Moslem style. The Pride of the Vardar surveyed it all, and saw that it was good.

Plunder and pillage, lords of Mohammed! Goreno is yours! Cry your loudest, daughters of Macedon! Heaven is a vast, leaden vault, dull and unresponsive. God is deaf and dumb this evening and this night. God is too high to hear you and the Czar too far to help.

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For this is Turkey; thus has it been with your mothers and your mothers' mothers these thirteen ghastly generations. Old Turkey, Young Turkey—sing the song in any key you please, it is the same old dirge of desolation. This is not Europe; this is Islam-land!

IN HIS dark cell, Boyan lay on the clammy floor of packed mud and listened to the riot of atrocities which rent the town. In days gone by the knowledge of such outrages would have driven him into black despair; now it only steeled his defiant spirit. The sense of his own helplessness maddened but did not crush him.

There was something almost epic about this man, once an ascetic exile from the world, now a prisoner on his way to the cruelest Pasha in Macedonia, listening to the massacre of Goreno and in his clammy cell planning the fall of an empire.

"Adalena," he whispered, "if we could only meet again! Together we could set this whole nation afire."

The jangle of keys at his door brought him to himself.

"Here, you sharp-tongued unbeliever," the jailer yelled at him, "up with you! In half an hour you go under special guard to Uskub. Akiff Pasha will tickle your tongue into confessing, and Akiff uses red pepper, I have heard.

"So listen to Old Mehmet Aga," the jailer went on wisely. "Oil your jaws a bit when you speak to him. Akiff Pasha is no Albanian. The high language doesn't go with him. He'd make kindlings of the Grand Vizier himself if the Vizier didn't weigh his words."

"Shut up," Boyan commanded. "Bring me something to eat."

"Feed a prisoner that is off my hands?" The jailer swore.

"Where do you think you are, you cassocked gander?" he continued, in a sneering manner. "There—can't you see what a plenty of them are crawling all about you?"

He sniffed in the direction of the inhabited walls.

"Eat your fill!"

He banged the door viciously as he left the *Bash-Komitaji* to his bed of clammy straw.

CHAPTER XXIX

TOOTH-MONEY

IN IVKO'S wayside inn Selim Bey held high court and carnival on a night biting, clear, and cold as only a Macedonian night can be cold when the winds of the Pirin peaks and the winds of Shar whistle in concert. The windows rattled behind their iron-bar lattices. The chimney-top moaned. The logs on the fire spasmodically flamed up or filled the room with smoke.

It was a night for ghost stories, for hot, steaming *raki* and ruddy wine, for indoor riot and ribald jollities. For Selim Bey, it was the last night of his lordship over the *Bash-Komitaji*, whose proud disdain had humiliated and increasingly angered him. But Selim was in the good graces of Akiff Pasha. He had even contemplated turning his back on rustic Goreno and trying his official luck in Uskub.

The safe delivery of the Master Rebel would improve his standing with the *Vali* of Uskub. Meanwhile the night was biting. So was Ivko's Vardar Valley wine; and the prisoner was accordingly dumped without much ado in a corner away from the fire and left there to ponder on his brief destiny in undisturbed solitude.

At a table drawn near the burning pine-logs, glasses clinked, platters clattered, the old rickety tavern rang with Turkish revelry. Only two sullen *zaptiehs* failed to share in the common jollification. Stationed near Boyan, they kept a grumbling vigil, covetously counting the glasses of wine and whisky that were the portion of their more fortunate comrades. They alone maintained the tradition of Moslem temperance, a tradition worn out and long ago forgotten by modernized Turkdom. They alone, and one other. By the foot of the shaky staircase, Tossun Effendi, sent along by Murad Pasha as his son's especial aide, watched the riotous crowd in taciturn disapproval. Unable to restrain himself any longer, he approached the Bey.

"I don't like it, Selim Bey," he remonstrated. "The *zaptiehs* are making hogs of themselves. Another hour, and their rifles will not be worth a shepherd's crook."

But Murad's son was in a democratic mood.

"You're a croaker, Tossun," he laughed

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at his aide. "The boys have been freezing on horseback all day, and we must be up and away bright and early to-morrow. Let them fill up for once in their lives. Nobody is paying for this!"

"*Psst*, you toothless caterpillar!" he shouted to the hostler. "Bring in another platterful of mutton, and have a bunch of garlic all cleaned to go with it. And here! We're all out of your baked dough. Haul in some real bread next time. And the boys have cleaned up all the eggs. And hurry up about it, you lazy-hands!"

Selim was warming up.

"And hold on here! Before you go after your litter, you had better pay up."

The innkeeper raised his hand to his heart in a pleading gesture:

"Pay up for what?"

"For what, you ask? For making me soil my mouth eating your garbage and drinking your swill, cripple-foot! Do you think I am going to work my teeth over a *giaour's* cooking for nothing, eh? Tooth-money you must pay us all: *dish-parasul*"

"Don't torture a carcass like me, pray don't, Selim Pasha!"

"Selim Pasha indeed!" the Bey roared. "Well, then, see what Selim Pasha will do to you. Essad Effendi!" he called to a burly *zaptieh*. "Hang him by one foot and shake out all his pockets."

Ten minutes later Ivko shambled off to the kitchen, his hands trembling, his head in a whirl, with a look of raging agony in the bloodshot eyes, while the *zaptiehs* were quarreling over the handful of copper and silver coin which had dropped out of his pockets. The Turks took up their drinking again.

Once more Tossun drew forward.

"I wish we had pushed on to Uskub to-night, Selim Bey," he insisted. "We could have made the city by midnight."

"Yes, and crept in like frozen curs to give our juicy bone over to Akiff Pasha! Listen to him, boys—" he turned to the *zaptiehs*—"why did we wear parade uniforms, if we meant to slip into Uskub by the back door?"

"*Uuuh!*" the *zaptiehs* jeered in sympathy with their chief.

"No, Tossun, we'll march in Uskub with drum and bagpipe precisely at noon to-morrow, and make every plump *Hanoum*, and *giaour* females too, air their houses while looking at us out of their windows."

The table applauded with clinking glasses and loud nose-blowing.

"THAT'S all right for to-morrow, Bey," Tossun took it up again. "But what of to-night?"

The Bey made an impatient gesture. "Oh, nothing. Who's going to attack us in this out-of-the-way hole? The garrison at Poosty is half an hour away, but what's the need? No one knows we are here. Don't bother me. Come, jolly up. Before we turn in, I'll order the soberest three or four to watch the road. But Ismail and Ahmed over there will take care of the *Bash-Komitaji*. Ahmed's ears once belonged to a greyhound; eh, Ahmed?"

He laughed uproariously.

"Here, Tossun!" Selim raised a glass. "Sweeten your temper a bit!"

The head *zaptieh* shook his head.

"Coffee, then," the Bey ordered. "*Psst*, you sniveling, knock-kneed, donkey-eared lunatic!" he shouted at the bewildered boy. "Bring the Effendi a cup of hot coffee, and don't bring hot swillwater like this you brought me, or I'll tan your hams!"

"Allah bless you with many concubines, Selim Bey!" a bleary Kurd yelled in a high-pitched voice. "Why did we leave Goreno just at the wrong time anyway, if we can't have a little fun out of this cold trip?"

The Kurd had struck a common note. The table buzzed with protests and reminiscences.

"Why, think of it!" A fat, fleshly, rascally-looking Turk held forth. "I have seven of them, as plump partridges as any you ever laid your hands on, locked in my stable. All they have is a pail of water."

"They'll have a lot more when you get back; eh, Kara-Osman?" a sophisticated youth with sunken cheeks and oily mustachios yelled at him. "But as for me, I took care of all of my birds while I was on the ground."

"It is the best plan," several wise heads nodded.

And the conversation wandered into its accustomed Turkish channels. The brave men of the Sultan vied with each other in the shameless explicitness of their narratives. Blatantly frank and circumstantial, the tales dripped from lips that curled with bestial memories. The unutterable story of Macedonian manhood and womanhood had undergone a diabolical translation, and

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the rehearsal of heart-rending cries now shook the round-table of Mohammedans with laughter.

Tossun took his coffee in slow, noisy sups, wiped his mustache on his sleeve, and went over to the corner where the prisoner sat. He looked long at the Bulgar and his two burly guards, then tapped Ahmed significantly on the shoulder.

"I am going to sleep now," he said. "At the least alarm fire a shot, and I'll be with you."

The *zaptieh* saluted. Tossun climbed the rickety stairs to the sleeping quarters above, selected a bed in the room nearest the landing, and rolled in.

The revelry below continued. But the Turks had been ahorse all day, and toward midnight even Selim Bey's animality grew drowsy. One after another the men straggled upstairs and threw themselves across the mattresses, the latest comers rolling on the floor.

Muddled, besotted with drink, Selim still had a hazy notion that he was to order some one to do something, but he could not remember exactly what. He scratched his forehead as he stretched his heavy legs on the single bed in the room reserved for himself, but he could only decide that some one was to guard somewhere. He banged on the wall. A sleepy *zaptieh* from the next room opened the door.

"Sit on the floor and watch my bed," Selim grunted and rolled over. The next minute both of them snored in concert.

CHAPTER XXX

A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH

DOWNSTAIRS all was quiet. In the muddy translucence of the little kerosene lamp the *zaptiehs* watched drowsily. Ivko stretched his weary frame on a bench near the fire, apparently asleep. The pine-logs had burned to coals. The wind whistled mockingly through the chimney, and little gusts of cold air coursed through the loose windows. Outdoors, a clear silver-gray chill wrapped the bare ground.

Boyan leaned back against the wall. His eyes closed wearily, only to open at the least stir indoors or out. Escape seemed beyond his hope now, if all he had heard of Akiff Pasha's cruelty was true. Yet he hoped against hope. Surely he could not be denied his chance to die fighting. This drunken rabble, only three of the brutes sober—— Surely there could be a way. And yet precious hours seemed to wear on, and no one came,—saint or sinner. Tomorrow he would be in Akiff Pasha's bottomless jail-pits. He had played a haughty game with time all the way from his craggy cell to Ivko's inn; but the end seemed near.

The shriveled, snively lad had disappeared.

Upstairs a window-shutter began flapping. Ivko stirred uneasily, got up and shuffled toward the stairs. A growl from Ahmed stopped him.

"The noise may disturb the Honorable Bey, Effendi," the old man remonstrated, pointing upstairs.

The *zaptieh* grunted in assent. The innkeeper stole softly up the stairs. He crept on tiptoe from room to room, ostensibly hunting the loose shutter. But as each door closed behind him, the key turned in the lock, imprisoning the sleepers within.

"And the windows are all iron-barred," Ivko grinned in toothless vindictiveness.

He came down to his bench and stretched himself on his back. Presently he sat up sniffing; there was a smoky smell of petroleum in the room; the lamp sputtered and burned at the wicket.

"Needs refilling, Effendi," he explained to Ahmed. "That lubber-lad always leaves half his chores undone."

He carried the lamp to the wood-shed. When he closed the doors only the glowing ashes threw dim, reddish lights over the three faces. The place was appallingly quiet. It made Ismail nervous. He turned his eyes questioningly to the other *zaptieh;* but Ahmed only stared ahead, his hands resting on his rifle.

"I wish some of the others——" he began, looking about the room uneasily. *"Oh!"*

Ahmed glanced up and found himself staring into the black nose of a revolver. Ismail sat up fascinated, stunned by the shining barrel which seemed to tickle his throat. Leaning forward in his astonishment, Boyan strained his eyes to catch sight of the two black figures behind the triggers. They stood perfectly immobile.

"One move, a sound, and you are dead *zaptiehs*," Boyan heard, in a voice that made his whole being riot within him. "Your rascally friends up-stairs are powerless to help you. Every door is locked and

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the windows iron-latticed. Ivko, take their rifles; then tie and gag them."

THE Turks stood helpless while the host dumped an armful of shavings and straw in the middle of the floor and approached them. The old heart beat rapidly with a new overmastering passion.

It was not mere revenge which thrilled the worn-out innkeeper; though—who knows?—perhaps in his mind there flashed the picture of his wife's black hair waving piteously from a Turk's saddle, while he himself looked on in helpless agony, bound to the hitching-post; and perchance he could still hear the heart-rending cries of his three little girls, strapped across another saddle. Memories which had haunted him all his life doubtless came back with fresh vividness as he bent to pick up the Moslems' rifles.

And yet more than personal vindictiveness glowed in the bloodshot eyes. The weather-beaten, nondescript peasant was for once in his life the messenger of a Balkan Nemesis. A deeper, vaster hatred consumed him. It was not even hatred, but a passion much more elemental—the avenging fury of an agonized people. The toothless mouth almost grinned in its calm intensity, for at last the stammering tongue had caught the long-lost idea which had forever eluded him.

"To-night God is greater than Allah, *zaptieh*," he hissed. "You have had your turn all my life. To-night Ivko is in the saddle."

Ahmed ground his teeth, but could not shift his eyes from the pitiless revolver.

"Here, Slavy!" Ivko turned to the boy. "Bring the rags and ropes."

Quietly and quickly the two worked. Not until the Turks lay on their backs, bound hand and foot and gagged, did the dark figures move their revolvers. Then with the low cry, "Boyan, you are free!" Adalena was at his feet, frantically cutting at the ropes about his feet and hands.

He staggered up, clasping her madly.

"It is you—you! You have saved me!"

"But not alone," she protested. "Ivan the huntsman is here. Without him I should have been helpless."

The two men shook hands in silence.

"We shall meet again," Ivan said significantly. "But now we must all be off at once."

"Just one moment, Ivan," old Ivko put in. "I went after some petroleum for this son of Allah. I must let him have it before I go."

He carried his can to the pile of shavings and poured the kerosene over the heap and around the floor at the foot of the stairs.

"Oh don't—not alive!"

Adalena shuddered in protest. But Ivko had already struck the match.

"Out of here, all of us!" he ordered. "No one under God or Allah will learn of this night's escape. Let it seem that we have all gone down together. *Go!*"

The flames leaped riotously from stair to stair and licked their way along the floor of the room toward the *zaptiehs*. They stirred in terror. The whole place filled with smoke. The five Bulgars shrank through the kitchen and into the cold Winter night.

"Here, Boyan, put on this coat, and here's your rifle," Ivan the huntsman said. "I'll take the other, and Ivko can carry my revolver."

"But what of Ivko?" Boyan spoke unsteadily. "Where will you go?"

"I, Master Rebel?" the host asked. "What does it matter where I go or where Slavy goes? We are nothing, we are—just little warts. There are thousands of Ivkos and Slavies in Macedonia. But you two—you will be the saving of us, and of Slavy's children and grandchildren."

The old innkeeper turned to Boyan and, almost shyly, stretched forth his hand. Boyan clasped it warmly.

"I DON'T suppose you will have time to remember me after we part, and it is no matter," he said in a low voice. "But look here, you snivel-nose," he called to the boy, "look here and don't forget to tell your sons and grandsons that Ivko the innkeeper, with whom you worked at the tavern near Poosty village; Ivko, with no teeth left in his mouth and no brains in his head, shook the Master Rebel's own hand with his dirty paw. The Virgin bless you, Master!" Then, as if ashamed of his outburst of loquacity, he drew back sheepishly.

"Now I guess we two will fade away somehow," he concluded.

"No, Ivko."

Ivan the huntsman stepped in.

"The Seven Well-Springs have a home

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for you and the boy. Come, let us be off. We shall cut cross-country straight for home, but more than three of us must not be together."

"*Listen!*"

The whole inn was ablaze. Tongues of flame shot from the windows. Yells and hurrying feet sounded from the upper floor. Rifle-butts banged on the locked doors and barred windows. Shots added to the chaos of curses and fire. The horses in the stable neighed and stamped in terror.

"Burn, old match-box! Burn, curse you! Not a soul of them shall ever come out alive!" Ivko yelled.

"Here!" Ivan shouted. "I've saddled the horses. Off with us all!"

Three figures ahorse vanished toward the Goreno uplands.

"And we, Adalena—whither?" Boyan hesitated a moment, curbing Tossun's horse, which pranced with fear.

"To the mountains," Adalena cried, and spurred Selim's Arab charger. "There is a chance of making the Vissoky Bridge 'way up in the country before daylight. If we cross it we're safe."

But the sound of answering volleys from the village brought them to a sudden stop.

"The garrison at Poosty is roused," Boyan exclaimed.

"Then to the river directly," Adalena gasped. "It must surely be frozen solid by now; it was ice all over when we came here this morning."

The horses dashed toward the Bistra; they reached it and raced down the road. The shots from Poosty grew more frequent every minute. But not a sound came from the burning tavern. The fire had lighted the whole country round, however.

They rode at top speed to reach the next turn in the road. Once out of sight from the village, they slowed down and looked for a likely place to cross.

"We must get across," Adalena insisted. "Budno Selo is an hour's ride in front of us, and if the Turkish soldiers there get roused, we'll be between two fires."

The two dismounted and stepped gingerly on to the ice. Boyan went ahead on the frozen surface, stamping lightly to test its strength. It held. Their spirits rose. They came nearer and nearer the middle of the stream.

CHAPTER XXXI

JUST BEFORE DAWN

"LOOK out!"

Boyan caught the girl's arm and pushed her back. They held their breath, listening. Just in front of them they heard the swish of the current rubbing against the ice-fringe and grinding the chunks broken from the sides.

"It is not frozen over," Boyan whispered desperately. "We cannot cross here."

"Can't we jump it?" Adalena strained her eyes to see the width of the opening.

"Even if we could, our weight would break the ice on the other side. Let's go farther down."

Half sliding, half running, they sped along the shore. Everywhere the same torrent ground its ice-victims and mocked at the fugitives.

"Isn't there a bridge or ford, or something?" Boyan groaned.

"The bridge is 'way behind us at Vissoky," Adalena answered, "and the Poosty garrison is in between. There is no ford or house or anything here, only a fisher-hut, abandoned in Winter. I saw it this morning."

"An old hut?" Boyan cried. "Where?"

"We can't hide in it. They will be searching it before morning."

"Where is it?" he repeated.

She led the way along the first fringe of trees. The loose door, flapping, creaking in the wind, guided them to the place.

The hut was really a shed, with the boards nailed loosely on the outer wall and part of them hanging down. Boyan felt them carefully. Then he grunted in satisfaction. He gripped a long plank and started ripping it from the wall. The nails squeaked, squealed.

"Be quiet!" Adalena whispered. The least noise lacerated her tense nerves.

A last crack, and the plank flopped to the ground, dragging the man with it.

"Quick," he said, scrambling up. "Help me carry this over."

Adalena caught the idea and sprang to his assistance. They carried their improvised bridge as near the edge of the ice as they dared and laid it down with one edge projecting over the water.

"Push," Boyan ordered breathlessly.

Slowly they shoved it forward, until they

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felt it touch the ice on the other side. Still another foot, and then Boyan crawled along to discover how far it reached over their own side. There was not an arm's length to spare.

"Step lightly and keep your head cool," he said hoarsely. "I think it will hold."

She drew back clutching his arm.

"Must I go first?" she pleaded. "Then what if it won't hold you?"

"You'll be safe anyway. *Go!*"

"Oh!" She drew away in terror.

He caught her fiercely in his arms; kissed her once, and then again, hotly.

"Adalena, for Heaven's sake, go!"

A whirl at their feet startled them.

"Boyan, it's gone!"

"The ice chunks must have piled up and swept it away," he groaned.

THEY dashed up the bank in reckless haste. A rifle cracked somewhere; then a scattered volley.

"The search has begun," Boyan said.

It was hard to find another board that would come off, though they searched all four walls.

"Why not try the door?" the girl suggested.

"Too short and heavy," Boyan replied. "Here! At last!"

He gave a violent jerk and ripped a plank from the shed wall, but it fell splintered in the middle. Boyan swore madly.

"No," she cried, "this is all right. Use the shorter piece for a lever and pry off the one below."

He snatched it up, working feverishly now. Slowly the plank loosened. It was longer and more securely nailed, but finally it yielded. Again they ran out upon the ice. The frail bridge was shoved forward. It touched, rested, on the farther edge.

"Now!" he begged.

She went forward without a word. Her foot on the edge, she turned just an instant and touched his hand with her fingertips. Then slowly, slowly, she stepped over the current. The ice fragments piled up; they touched her feet as she walked on, inch by inch, her hands outstretched to preserve her balance.

"Hold the board! I'm across," she called, her voice so weak that she doubted if he could hear. She crouched, then stretched herself prone on the ice, clinging to the end of the plank.

"Lift it, Boyan. Let the ice float away."

She felt the board move. She lifted it. The ice jam swept with the current. They adjusted the board again.

"Come," she called to him, and strained to see him start. She could not move; she still lay prone on the ice, face downward, clutching the board convulsively. She saw him coming nearer, nearer, halfway, two-thirds over. She was breathing again. Then, directly before her, she heard the ice giving way, with a steady, certain cracking. The board trembled—shook. The ice had opened on the other side.

"Boyan!" she shrieked in horror.

The plank whirled, was almost wrenched from her grasp. She jerked back, her fingers madly clutching her end of the perilous bridge. But with one last lunge, Boyan leaped and rolled over and over to safety.

She crept to him. They climbed up the bank. Trembling, panting, hand in hand, they stood there, listening. Pursuit was very near, but between them and the enemy the current of the Bistra River sang a song of promise, of freedom.

"See, Boyan!" She pointed northward. "Across this valley are the Brigand Highlands, where no Turkish soldiers dare follow us. Beyond is Bulgaria."

"Bulgaria?" he asked. "What is Bulgaria to us now?"

"Your dream has become my hope of hopes for Macedonia," she answered. "In Bulgaria you shall preach the Balkan Alliance, the Crusade against the Turk."

"Adalena!" He clasped her hands fervently. "First of all I must earn the right to look Ivko the innkeeper straight in the face. Look, in this maze of mountain wilds shepherd homes are waiting for your message and mine. Before I can preach a Balkan crusade in free Bulgaria, I must carry the word of liberty to these men and women. Then—*then!*"

He held her in his arms for one long moment. Before them, to the north, stretched the "Brigand Highlands," where no Turks dare pursue; and beyond, Bulgaria and freedom. But they turned to the west, where Macedonia, daughter of sorrows, still slept a troubled sleep, dreaming of the dawn that had tarried half a thousand years.

THE END

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MAKING THE INSURANCE PAY

A TALE OF SUNDAY'S BOARDING-HOUSE

by S·B·H·HURST

SUNDAY—while waiting rather impatiently in his dirty little office for one Captain Jenkins, a lean and hungry-looking mariner who had a proposition which attracted—tried to banish the memory of his shanghaied brother by admiring the credit-balance of his bankbook, but failed miserably. Three days ago Ikey had paraded an easy beat in all the glory of a patrolman's uniform; now, mistaken for another policeman by both Sunday and his runners, he was at sea in one of the hardest ships afloat. And all he had taken with him was an undershirt.

Again Sunday opened the passbook. The huge profits made out of unfortunate sailors had swelled to the nice sum of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars—the feeling of having the actual cash recompensing him for the loss of interest on so much idle capital. How he loved that credit column! He watched its growth with all the tender care a loving parent bestows on an only child. And now Jenkins had shown him a way to double it, almost, by investing only a small part. For the moment, his brother was forgotten. He actually ceased chewing tobacco, and lit a cigar.

But he gathered his features into the indifferent expression of which he was so proud, for he heard footsteps. Then came the Captain's knock on the door, which Sunday opened eagerly. He locked it carefully when Jenkins entered, sat down in his swivel chair and motioned his guest to take the other.

"Well?" said the visitor.

"I've thought over your proposition, Captain Jenkins," said Sunday, "and I think I can raise the money; but it's a little out of my line. Just go over it all again will you?"

"Here's the idee," replied the Captain. "The bark *John Billings* is advertised for charter. I've been master of her for two voyages. You charters her for to load a general cargo for Cape Town. You insures this valuable cargo for a hundred and fifty thousand dollars, the cost of the cargo and insurance not being more than ten thousand—you said you knew how to get the bales of piece-goods and such filled with valuable newspapers and such." The Captain grinned.

Sunday considered for fully five minutes.

"Where do you figger to lose her?" he asked.

"Don't believe in fixin' any special place—wait till time serves. She's a wooden vessel, and the job's easy."

"I can get the cargo all right," said Sunday, "and if you work it right you gets your twenty thousand. But how do I know you won't spend the money and then come around asking for more?"

Sunday felt rather proud of the way he hinted at blackmail.

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"Aw, blazes, ain't you got it on me as much as I have on you?" said Jenkins.

"Capitalists is always to be got at," said Sunday.

"Won't I have capital myself when I gets my bit?" said the Captain indignantly.

"You have a reputation of being a spender," said Sunday.

"Well, you haven't, that's sure!" said the other nastily.

"Oh, don't let's quarrel," said the boarding-house keeper hastily, for he saw a very good thing ahead of him with little risk to himself.

"I'm sure I don't want to." Jenkins was mollified. He was quite as afraid as Sunday of losing the chance, and he knew nobody else to whom he could broach it.

"The only thing I can't figger out," said Sunday, "is how we can fix it so we both can have proofs we are both satisfied when we pull it off. You won't want to give me a receipt for your share, will you?"

"We got to trust each other," said Jenkins, who trusted no one, and whom no one trusted. "We can't have any papers lying around."

"I'll think out some way," said Sunday.

"There ain't no other but take each other's word." The Captain was as indignant as he could get to be.

"That's all right. When I've known you a little longer, I'll understand you better."

"You've known me as long as I have you," snarled Jenkins. "I haven't said a word about not trusting you."

"That's all right, cap. Don't be angry. You go and see about the charter, and see me as soon as you have time."

Jenkins pulled out his watch.

"It's eleven o'clock now," he said. "I can get over to New York, see the owners and be back by three, easy."

"I'll meet you here," said Sunday.

And the precious pair parted.

Captain Jenkins returned before three o'clock. In fact, he was back before two with the unpleasant news that the owners of the bark *John Billings* had declined to charter her. When he had called their attention to the advertisement, they had reminded him that she was their ship, and they had the right to refuse to charter if so they wished. Now, if Captain Jenkins wanted her, he must be prepared to pay fifty thousand dollars, and buy her. He had called their attention also to his services as master of the bark, and they had replied that they had paid him wages commensurate with those services.

To the Captain's great surprise, Sunday seemed pleased with the news. He saw further profits in the insurance of the vessel, and was also pleased that all the claims would come from him. And he would not have to be mixed up with any other capitalist in the deal. But he had no intention of paying the price asked. He did not know a great deal about the value of vessels, but it was a matter of principle with him to lower the prices of the things he bought, and increase those of what he sold.

In the end he became owner of the good ship *John Billings* at $43,730, and rather prided himself upon his bigness in that he did not dicker about the odd cents he might easily have suggested.

HE LOADED her as deep as he could, or rather as deep as Jenkins would stand for. Jenkins reminded him that he did not intend to let her sink in the North Atlantic, because Winter in that ocean was no time for small-boat expeditions, and the month was January.

Where he got that cargo, no man knoweth. True, several men know where parts of it came from, since he dealt with many junk dealers. He also in some way impressed the insurance agents with his good faith and, after taking over her old policy of thirty thousand, succeeded in placing a round hundred and ten thousand on a cargo that had cost him so little that it would be a joke to give the price.

He balked somewhat at paying for a tug to take the ship out, but his Captain absolutely refused to sail her, and so he hired the smallest and cheapest towboat he could find after three days of looking. Then he began to dream about the details of the loss of his ship, and practised an expression of deep grief in the privacy of his office.

They had agreed to take each other's word in lieu of receipts, when the time came for settlement, but the Captain had insisted on twenty-five thousand because of the extra insurance on the ship, which had not been considered when they expected to charter. And the *John Billings* sailed away making good weather of a Winter's gale she met the second day at sea—acting as a loyal vessel will, even if she has a Captain and owner who are plotting to murder her.

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Well into the Gulf Stream, Jenkins made three auger-holes below the water line in the lazaretto, which he plugged. Aweek later, between two and three bells in the middle watch, lying asleep in his bunk, he was awakened by a slight shock. Running on deck he found the officer of the watch staring astern into the darkness. The Captain asked what had happened.

"I think we hit a small boat, probably bottom up, sir," said the mate.

"Call the carpenter, and have him sound the well," ordered Jenkins.

"All right, sir, but I don't see what harm it could have done us."

"Never mind. Call Chips."

And while the carpenter was getting out of his bunk and putting chalk on his sounding rod, Jenkins ran below into the lazaret and withdrew the plugs.

"Carpenter says two inches in the well—pumps suck at that," said the mate, coming up on the poop, where Jenkins had hurried after doing his business below.

"That's good," he replied. "I was afraid at first we were hurt."

And he went below again, being careful to undress.

Now, on board a well regulated ship the carpenter's first duty, when he comes on deck at half-past five in the morning, is to sound the well. Jenkins evinced great surprise and apparent alarm when the mate, to whom the carpenter had reported his discovery, apprised him of two feet of water in the bilges.

"Have you manned the pump?" asked Jenkins.

"Certainly, sir."

"Then have the cook get coffee in a hurry for all hands, and set them pumping as soon as they're up. I'll be on deck in a minute."

The mate hurried away, and the Captain smiled at his reflection in the small shaving-mirror over his desk.

"Twenty-five thousand dollars — more than I could ever make at sea," he said, forgetting to be exact in his remark. But then he was somewhat excited.

They had no donkey engine on the *Billings*, and while the men did their best in spells of ten minutes a watch, the "leak" gained on them from the start, as the Captain had intended it should. And when the crew protested against killing themselves, Jenkins shrugged his shoulders, and told them to get the boats over.

One very often reads about a crew, in a similar situation, finding the leak and stopping it with something. But such a proceeding never occurred to the men of the *Billings*, since they knew how very unlikely it was that they would find it, judging from the standpoint of a legitimate leak. In this case, of course, a trip into the lazaret would have disclosed the holes just below the waterline, but Jenkins was careful not to send any one there.

So he gave the order, and they left her, and rowed away in the darkness. Next morning they were picked up by a steamer bound for Montevideo. Although, naturally, he did not object, Jenkins was disappointed about this, because it meant a delay of about two months more before he could be in New York to put in claims on the insurance companies, since Sunday had agreed to await his arrival before acting. It would look better not to be too anxious.

II

SUNDAY carefully locked the office door and they both sat down.

"Tell me how you did it," said the boarding-house keeper.

Jenkins, smiling all over his face, complied, adding:

"Have you asked for claim papers yet?"

"No," said Sunday. "The companies wrote me they had been notified by some feller or other, I forget the name——Wait till I get the letter."

"Never mind," said Jenkins. "It was the telegram that goes all over the world when a ship is reported lost."

"I see——" began the other, when a loud and continued knocking at the door interrupted him.

Both men looked nervous. Was it the police? Could they have been found out?

"Open the door!" said a man's voice.

Sunday knew that voice too well to hesitate. He jumped up and flung out upon the speaker, embracing him with great fervor.

"What the——" said Jenkins.

"My brother," explained the boarding-house keeper, between hugs.

"Oh!" grunted Jenkins, relieved.

Sunday began dragging his brother into the office.

"The business can wait," he said. "Don't go, cap. Let's hear my brother tell how he got back."

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"I'd like to know who started me!" said the brother.

"Never mind that. Tell us how you got away," said Sunday.

"You knew where I was, then?" said the brother menacingly.

"I?" gasped Sunday, seeing too late that he had admitted the knowledge of his brother's disappearance.

"Yes! Why —— you, you had me put!"

"It was a mistake, I assure you," answered the now thoroughly scared boarding-house keeper, who knew that the family principle was never to let relation interfere with business; and his brother had grounds for both civil and criminal action.

"Well?" said the brother.

The wretched Sunday explained all about the hold-up policeman, O'Hara, and the mistake his runners made in taking him (the brother) for him (O'Hara), mixing himself up very badly as he did so.

"Oh, cut it," broke in the brother. "If I hadn't made a fortune while I was away I'd fix you. As it is, you've got to keep me, fortune or no fortune, as long as I want."

"Fortune—money?" said Sunday.

"Yes, money! Suppose you want some of it for getting me the job, eh?"

"Why, no, certainly not. I ain't a hog."

"No, and you ain't a shanghaier, yet. You'll be shanghaing yourself if you don't watch out, in mistake for a d tch-digger you gave knock-out drops to."

"I deserve it!" wailed Sunday. "I do! But the money? How did you get it, Ikey?"

Ikey looked at Captain Jenkins doubtfully.

"Oh, he's all right. He's Captain of my ship—I mean, he was," said Sunday, proceeding to introduce them.

"Your ship? I didn't know you had a ship," said Ikey.

"Oh, yes. It's a bit of a secret, Ikey, but I did have a ship."

"And what did this feller do to it—what did he do to the ship you had?"

"That I'll tell some time else, Ikey—just now it's a secret, you understan'. But your money—you know how I like you, Ikey."

"Yes, it looked like it when I wakes up on that ship you put me on, and the mate he comes and kicks me more. Say, who kicked me before I was on the ship?"

Sunday, who had done the kicking—mistaking his unconscious brother, lying face down on the street, for O'Hara—blushed painfully and hastened to change the subject.

"I'll bet yer you got your money honest. I always said you was honest."

"You don't know what honest is," retorted Ikey. "But let's sit down and I'll tell you all about it."

They had been standing with the door open while they talked, but now, since business was to be discussed, Sunday went through the inevitable performance of locking it very carefully, while his guests seated themselves in the only chairs. So the boarding-house keeper was forced to lean himself as gracefully as he could against the desk, which speaks volumes for his chastened state of mind.

IKEY took a cigar out of the box on the right hand side of the desk, passing one to Jenkins. After a few puffs, he threw it away, and took one from the box on the left hand side, also giving one to the Captain.

"You changed their places!" Ikey said accusingly to his brother.

"Tell you the truth, Ikey," protested Sunday, "I been so upset since you went away, I didn't know what I was doing. That's how I done it."

Ikey appeared to accept the excuse.

"Well," he said, "when I gets able to walk about that ship, I had a terrible time—an awful terrible time. Beats and beats—and I couldn't hit back, neither."

"Why not?" asked Sunday.

"It was officers that beat me. Don't you know it's mutiny to hit back at an officer?" replied Ikey.

"Sure. I see," said Sunday. "But the money—tell me about the money."

"I'm coming to that. You see we gets into a storm and leaks—leaks till we has to get into the little boats. I was in the boat with the second mate and four other men and we was the only ones saved."

"How?" broke in Sunday.

"We was all in—thirsty and no grub, neither—when we sees a ship. Well, we gets to the ship, and there was nobody on it, and it was nearly full of water. But the second mate finds the holes and plugs them, and made us work the pump all the time—three men died with it. But I only pretended to pump—the other men turned it, and I just went round with the handle. Well we was lucky, because when the men was dead,

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and only me and the second mate left we saw a tug that had been taking a dry dock to some place, and he brings us back to New York.

"And you found money on the ship?" said Sunday, not understanding; while Jenkins remained silent.

"No. It was salvage, the second mate called it. Said there was some crooked work, too. The owners of the ship and cargo has to pay us for finding it."

The lean Jenkins, clasping and unclasping his hands nervously, rose to his feet.

"What was the name of the ship you found?" he asked.

"The *John Billings*," answered Ikey.

THE ATTITUDE of MEDITATION

GORDON McCREAGH

IT FLASHED through the silk bazaar in Mandalay that Moung Tha-Dun was about to become a monk; and the whole *Zay-Gyo* sat up, gasped, stared, and said:

"No, it is impossible! Tha-Dun, the irrepressible, and irresponsible? Tha-Dun, the—" here the voices dropped to whispers—"the pirate? Become a *hpongyi?* Never!"

And two days later the *Zay-Gyo* buzzed with the talk that the impossible was nevertheless about to be accomplished. The pretty little stall-keepers, in their riotous silken color-schemes, paused twenty times a day—that is to say, as often as they knelt so artlessly before their little mirrors to rearrange their make-up in full view of the passing public—and sighed as they thought of the coming calamity.

True, he had never shown any of them more than a passing favor; he would swagger through the stalls chaffing and teasing with careless indiscrimination. Girls seemed to bother him not at all. He preferred the open places, and was best pleased when the trouble was thickest; but perhaps for that very reason they would all pray, whenever they went to make their offerings of flowers and colored candles at the great pagoda, that a kind Providence might send them just such a lover as Moung Tha-Dun.

And now—he was about to take the saffron robe and the fan! That very day he was riding round on a gorgeously caparisoned pony, escorted by a band of his brothers to be, saying good-by to his friends, to the world.

As all miracles are the outcome of some supernormal force, so was this wonder the direct result of an all-compelling Fate.

Old Moung Hyo, the paddy-trader, Moung Tha-Dun's father, had spent many iniquitous years in the acquisition of wealth by piratical methods, with the usual result that as the fires of his youth died out, his scorched conscience, reviving sufficiently

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to exhibit alarming fears for his future welfare, impelled him to insure it by acquiring merit while there was yet time.

It is an axiom of priestcraft in all the Orient that the worthiest form of charity is that which most nearly affects the priests; and in keeping with this doctrine, in Burma the most merit is acquired, and salvation is assured, by building and endowing a '*hpongyi-kyaung*,' or monastery.

Moung Hyo was preparing to wipe out fifty years of high finance with a gorgeous *kyaung* for thirty *hpongyis*—all teak and palmyra matting, no cheap stuff—when an inappreciative Fate swooped like a patient eagle and at one stroke robbed him of all his hoard in an ill-considered deal in which he had tried to get the better of an Armenian.

The attempt had been foolish in its inception; for no man ever got the better of an Armenian, not even a Bagdad Jew; but years of successful duplicity among his simple countrymen had rendered old Moung Hyo overconfident. He thought to fly at higher game, and this particular Armenian lured him guilefully from his defenses and then turned and smote him hip and thigh.

Gone were the old man's plans for the *hpongyi-kyaung*; gone his hopes of salvation. Only one chance remained, and that a desperate one; but still his frenzied conscience drove him to clutch at it. This last floating straw was a wild hope of dedicating his only son to the Church.

MOUNG THA-DUN was the last man to make a monk of. His Burman activity of intellect was leavened with a Shan aggressiveness from his mother's side, for she had come from Lashio in the Shan States. He had inherited all his father's lawlessness, but the mountaineer blood in him turned his turbulent spirit in the direction of open-handed violence rather than the cunning artifices of trade, which he despised. In his early boyhood he had run away from the tame city life to his mother's people, where the carrying of heavy burdens up the steep hillsides had developed knotted shoulders and the curious bow-legged appearance common to hillmen from excessive development of the extensor muscles.

Here, it had been rumored, he had taken part in several border raids and one or two minor dacoities, allying himself to no particular party, but for the sheer love of excitement. Later he forsook this unprofitable existence and came back to Mandalay and the Irawadi, his sole possessions being a beautifully-balanced *dah* with a silver hilt, and a perfect constitution.

The great River, with its tales of smugglers, and pirates, and *nats*, and water-spirits, made an irresistible appeal to his adventurous soul. But he could not venture without a boat. After communing with his soul through many long nights, during which he brooded like a night-hawk over the dark stream, he decided that life held nothing for him unless he got one, and a good one at that. He would be content with no cheap canoe.

His method of obtaining it was characteristic. He staked his *dah* against a trained game-cock in a kick-fight with a Burman; and having duly disabled his opponent, set out with his new possession to gamble his way to fortune. Burmans will gamble anything in the world, from money to wives, on cock-fights, and Tha-Dun waded into the stormy career of a fight-promoter and manager with the cheerful optimism of a man who has nothing to lose and the whole world to win. He emerged with a bedraggled and one-eyed game-cock, and a splendid, plank-built, fiber-stitched boat with a lofty curving stern, on which the cock took up a vociferously vainglorious residence, and was properly reverenced as the incarnation of its tutelary spirit.

Moung Tha-Dun was now a whole man, owner of his own craft, and dependent on nobody. He collected a crew of irresponsible kindred spirits and set out to seek fame and fortune. Fame, or rather its less savory equivalent, notoriety, he acquired in plenty; for he cheerfully broke all the game- and fish-conservation laws, and gaily smuggled opium. Fortune there was not much of in either, but there was the ever-present chance of a chase by the revenue officers, with its attendant excitement. Tha-Dun filled his lungs with deep breaths of glorious life every minute of his existence.

The officials hated him, and the girls adored him; and he treated them alike with cheerful indifference on his infrequent and unexpected visits to the capital.

This was the son on whom old Moung Hyo hinged his hopes of future salvation and whom he had sent for haply to cajole into a monastery.

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MOUNG THA-DUN came at his father's summons and listened to the tale in gloomy silence. Not at all was he inclined to leave the world that was so pleasant. But filial piety is enjoined as one of the strictest duties in the Buddhistic teachings; and old Moung Hyo was very old—it looked as if this would be the last thing he would ever ask.

The crafty old sinner argued cunningly.

"What has the world to give you after all, my son?" he urged. "Nothing but hard knocks and trouble, and the certainty that you will be caught sooner or later by the revenue men. It is not as if you wished to get married and settle down. For you are not as most young men are; you seem not to care for the girls. In fact, my son, I must insist; unless you tell me that you intend to take a wife and leave this vagabond life——"

Moung Tha-Dun hastily capitulated without further argument.

"I had rather become a *hpongyi*, my father," he declared.

And so Moung Tha-Dun rode around, accompanied by a band of *hpongyis*, saying good-by to the world and leaving a trail of heavy hearts behind him. Later he was stripped by his companions and purified with a bath, and the yellow robe was draped over his great shoulders. Then his head was shaved and anointed with saffron, and into one hand was placed the begging-bowl, and into the other the palm-leaf fan with which to hide his face when passing women; and the priests chanted the renunciation, and a deep-noted gong boomed in rhythm; and Moung Tha-Dun stepped out of the preparation-chamber, out of the world; to be known henceforth as *U* Tha-Dun, the prefix of respect, and addressed humbly as '*hpaya.*'

And the old Abbot, Saya Ananda, an Irishman who had been a Catholic in the world which he had left so long ago, and of which he had seen so much; and who could read men's hearts like an open book, received the novice with a world of kindly sympathy in his eyes and made things easy for him.

THUS did the old reprobate, Moung Hyo, purchase peace of mind for his few remaining days at the expense of his son's whole life—and a week later he died.

A week later again, U Tha-Dun commenced to go the daily rounds accompanied by a group of his brethren with their begging-bowls to collect alms. With the exquisite tendencies of the Burmans, their priests do not *ask* for offerings. They merely go the rounds striking a gong to acquaint the people of their presence. The piously inclined may then come to their doors and give whatsoever they will, which is accepted with an averted face and a blessing, whether it be a handful of rice or a handful of money. Those who do not wish to contribute are thus spared the unpleasantness of having to "pass by the offertory plate."

It was then that a certain maid, who should have known better, and who had hitherto spent her time frequenting the *Zay-Gyo* promenade and flirting her fan at the boys, suddenly became obsessed with unexpected piety, and religiously awaited the coming of the *hpongyis* with offerings of daintily cooked messes which smelt appallingly of decaying fish.

But her access of piety did not prevent her from putting on her most riotous silk dress with the zigzag rainbow design, and powdering her face thickly with native '*thanakha*,' and arranging heavy-scented orchids in her glossy hair, so that she made a picture like an exquisite china doll against the appropriate background of willow-pattern matting of her home fence.

And curiously enough, her piety moved her only on those days on which U Tha-Dun was among the begging party—she could always tell from a distance, for, being a Shan, he was very fair, and moreover his restless muscles could with difficulty accommodate themselves to the slow gait of the brethren. Nor did her piety restrain her from always placing her offering in the bowl of the tall young novice, and taking the opportunity to whisper trivialities about the good Abbot's health.

But the novice was a man who did what he did thoroughly. Since he was a priest, he would be a priest; and he rigorously kept his face averted and answered only in monosyllables. And little Mah-Shwé stamped her feet, and whispered, "*Hach akaunggale!*" which means, "Hateful boob!"

She surely should have known better. But then she had been spoiled by too much admiration from the young sparks in the bazaar, who made verses to little "Miss

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Gold-Leaf" and named their polo-ponies after her.

And she made excuses for herself.

"Haven't I known him since he was a boy?" she would commune to herself. "And didn't we steal the sweetmeat vendor's candy together? Why shouldn't I speak to him?"

And then, one day, Mah-Shwé's gods—for in her heart she was a complete heathen, and prayed to many, including those imported from the mission-school—her gods were good to her, and brought her an undreamed-of opportunity.

It happened in this wise. U Tha-Dun had been despatched on an errand by the old Abbot into the town, and his way took him past Mah-Shwé's door. As he approached, he became aware of a scuffle and an indignant "Let me go, you black man!" proceeding from the narrow alley between her house and the next.

With a strange turmoil in his heart he leapt forward and saw Mah-Shwé struggling with a tall stranger, who held her by the wrist. The man was big-boned and bearded, obviously from India, which accounted for her scornful epithet of "black man."

In an instant his robe and his office were forgotten, and the novice crouched with the natural instinct of a fighter, while his big shoulder muscles stiffened with swift anger. The assault seemed to him as much of an outrage as would be a jungle ape's abduction of a child.

THE man threw a quick glance around with the nervous cowardice of the wrong-doer detected. But there was no retreat; Tha-Dun stood in the entrance of the passageway. Then, seeing only a priest, he advanced confidently, growling in halting Burmese, "Get out of my way there, thou!"

A fierce exultation surged up in Tha-Dun's breast, and he laughed aloud with joy; or rather, he thought that he laughed. It really sounded more like the snarl of a crouching leopard.

"Nay," he purred. "Come thou rather and make a way."

For a moment the man recoiled from the panther-light in U Tha-Dun's eyes. Then, with a confident realization of his own size and weight, he came forward again at a run. A curved knife gleamed miraculously in his hand.

This was no hesitating, play-for-an-opening affair. Both were primitive men, with the primitive men's desire to come to grips. Tha-Dun for his part had no knowledge of scientific knife-play; his weapon in any case was the *dah*. But, unarmed, he fought as his fathers had fought before him, the kick-fight of the Burmans.

As the stranger bent slightly to give weight to the swift upthrust of the experienced knife-player, Tha-Dun leaped high in the air with both feet and landed full on the other's chest, while the knife stroke hissed wickedly up where his ribs should have been. Together they rolled to the ground. With the quickness of a cat Tha-Dun smashed his knee into the Indian's face. The next instant they were both on their feet again.

The Indian, half blinded with his own blood, in his flurry stabbed wildly, downwards. This, of course, was a gift for the active Burman. He seized the wrist on the down stroke, whirled the arm up and over his own head, slipped his right hand under the other's thigh, and hurled him sprawling far into the roadway. Then he snatched at the fallen knife to finish it—and tripped over his long robe.

With that came recollection, and he drew back, ashamed and trembling. The Indian took the opportunity to race down the road like an antelope. The sound of his swift falling feet roused a few householders from the lethargic heat to come to their doors and peer curiously.

Mah-Shwé meanwhile had drawn Tha-Dun into the alleyway unresisting. She came of a people who were accustomed to violence in all its forms, and after the first natural gasp of fear while the short struggle lasted, and the ensuing thrill of relief, she was entirely self-possessed. She thanked her gods for the opportunity, and joyfully proceeded to take full advantage of it. Burmese girls have not acquired the civilized art of fainting; but she made the best use of such simple wiles as she knew. She clung to the young priest and sobbed, and called him her deliverer, and inquired solicitously if he were hurt.

And the great, unaffected man knew no better than to murmur, "Alas, I have broken the rule which says, 'Raise not thy hand in anger,' and also that which says, 'Remember thy robe and its sacred office.'"

But it was not humanly possible for this

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swift contrition to last while his blood still tingled from the encounter. His nostrils dilated with deep breaths as if he were scenting the battle once more. He looked hungrily in the direction the Indian had taken, and stretched his shoulders luxuriously.

"*Aie*," he muttered with sparkling eyes. "After so many days!" Then, "What was the trouble, Mah-Shwé? Who is the dog?"

Mah-Shwé nestled unnecessarily close to him.

"Nay, I know not—*hpaya!*"

She made a wry face as she uttered the priestly appellation.

"He calls himself Lutf Ullah, and is but lately come to Mandalay; and ever since his arrival has he been pestering me. But, wah! What matter! Why have you not spoken to me all these days, *hpaya?*"

For some reason which he could not analyze Lutf Ullah appeared to Tha-Dun to be the most hated man in the world. His mind ran on in the same groove and he ignored her question.

"Has he ever done aught before?"

Mah-Shwé tossed her head and shrugged in the extremity of scorn. "That black man! But what need to talk of him? You have much news to tell me."

"Nay, I must go; the Saya will question."

"Tell him, then, the truth. He is a *man*. As for a little delay——"

And U Tha-Dun, the priest, was persuaded. Perhaps because the virile youthfulness of him, having once broken out, was too hard to bottle up again all at once; perhaps he thought he might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb. Anyway, the desire to remain was there, though he could not for the life of him have explained why.

But when he did return to the *kyaung*, having taken a full hour longer over his errand than he should have done, and prepared to take his reproof from the Abbot with as good grace as he might, he found a state of confusion and excitement in the midst of which he had been completely forgotten. The Saya was closeted with an emissary from the Dalai Lama at Lhasa, the Pope of the whole Lamaistic world.

LATER, the story was circulated with many ejaculations of horror among the brethren. Its beginning dated back to the dark year when the sacrilegious feet of foreign devils under Colonel Younghusband had, for the first time in history, trodden the sacred streets of the Forbidden City. At that ill-omened time, when the Dalai Lama and his Kazis had been forced to flee before the approach of the strangers, the great golden Buddha in the Kiang-Hsi Monastery, symbolizing the spirit of the Master, with its six attendant images in the prescribed attitudes, had been buried in a hastily constructed cellar under the monastery.

But, although looting had been strictly prohibited, some marauding infidel had discovered the hiding-place and made away with the six little images, leaving the central figure only because it had been too heavy to remove. With infinite perseverance, and the pulling of priestly strings over half the world, one of the images—that in the attitude of meditation, with the sapphire in the forehead—had been traced to Mandalay; and it was now the order of the Dalai Lama that the monks of the Hpaya-Gyi should assist in its recovery.

On the following day Tha-Dun was summoned to the presence of the Abbot, and stood with downcast eyes, as prescribed, till he should be spoken to. The Saya sat a long while looking him over with grave deliberation. Tha-Dun, without looking up, could clearly feel a keen consideration and accurate analysis of himself; and he grew intensely uncomfortable, fearing lest his adventure of yesterday had come to the old man's ears, perhaps with embellishments. What else would warrant such serious reflection?

Finally the Saya nodded his head with evident satisfaction and commenced:

"Son, you have been all your life a man of haste and violence. Is it not so?"

Tha-Dun's heart fell.

"Yes Saya," he murmured.

But the Abbot's next words removed all his misgivings.

"You have heard the talk of the man from Thibet, and what is required?"

"Yes, Saya."

"Son, I have weighed you carefully in the balance, and it seems to me that you alone of all of us are fitted to go out secretly and take up this matter."

Tha-Dun's heart leaped, and he could have shouted for joy. He saw a picture of himself out in the world again, his world, *free*—to follow intrigue, excitement and adventure! Free; if only for a short time—

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all too short in fact. And then the picture slowly faded and gave place to another, and he saw himself coming back to the monastery after his glorious taste of liberty. He pictured the wrench, and the gnawing pain, and the hopeless longing, rendered all the more vivid by his experience after his little flight of yesterday; and his mood slowly changed.

He must have stood several minutes reflecting over these things, while the wise old Abbot watched him with eyes that seemed to read his thoughts as they took shape. When he finally raised his head and begged that this duty might be excused him, the old man showed not the least surprise.

"Tell me your thoughts, son," was all he said.

In halting words and few, Tha-Dun tried to explain; and the old man saw into his very soul. He saw there even more than Tha-Dun himself knew of. A slow smile of complete understanding came into the kindly old eyes.

"It is well, my son," he said simply. "You may go."

And so Tha-Dun resolutely put away from him the thought of his offered holiday, and went out soberly on the following day with the brethren on their usual round.

Mah-Shwé's hopes had risen high, thinking that, now that the ice had been broken, there would be less difficulty about snatching little bits of conversation. But she was doomed to the keenest disappointment. Tha-Dun accepted her offering with a rigorously averted face and the stereotyped blessing. She was ready to cry with vexation.

ON THE following day she was bolder; insistent, in fact. "Tha-Dun," she whispered, dropping the hateful *hpaya*; "I must speak with you in private."

"Girl, that may not be. It is not permitted."

"But I must. It is important. About ——:"

"It is impossible, whatever it may be about."

"About Lutf Ullah, the black man."

Tha-Dun's hardly-formed resolutions crumbled like tinder-bark. "Impossible!" he repeated mechanically, but the cold determination had gone from his voice.

Another priest came slowly toward them from the door of the next house. Mah-Shwé, with a woman's intuition, saw that the psychological moment was at hand, and whispered swiftly—

"At sundown, by the tank of the sacred turtles."

Tha-Dun's reply came steady in the prescribed monotone.

"The cheerful giver is doubly blessed."

The other priest joined him, and they moved on together. But Mah-Shwé went skipping back into the house in complete content.

II

SUNDOWN in Mandalay is synonymous with dusk. The darkness comes down like a blanket, and the million insects of the tropic night begin their chorus almost before the birds have concluded their last sleepy cluckings. Then, just as the swift-falling gloom seems about to blot out the whole world, it melts like a diffusing transformation, and one is surprised to see an arc-light moon beaming out already high in the sky.

Tha-Dun made his way unwillingly yet helplessly to the turtle-tank. *Hpongyis* are not permitted outside of the *kyaung*-grounds after sundown. But the tank was within bounds, and it was not uncommon for earnest monks to go out in the cool of the evening and meditate on the Infinite, wandering among the toddy-palms, or gazing out over the brilliant reflections and blue-black shadows on the mirror surface of the tank, broken only when a soft ripple showed where an overfed turtle flopped lazily after some floating insect, while crooning tinkles from the little bells strung under the eaves of the monastery spires came as a constant reminder of the consecrated locality.

No place for a priest—and a maid. Yet Tha-Dun, the priest, came, treading easily amongst the delicate tracery of feather designs shadowed from the palm tops.

Mah-Shwé was waiting, crouched behind the crumbling coping of the tank overflow. She hissed like a snake to attract his attention. He strode over and stood erect and bold, with all the incaution of inexperience, and it came into his mind that the girl nestled there looking like some beautiful night-blooming flower.

"Sit down and hide your great self," she whispered angrily.

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"Nay, but what need? What is it you would say about the man?"

"Why did you keep me waiting so long? Why would you not speak to me to-day and yesterday? What did the Saya say when you were late?"

"Nay, what matter, girl? What of the man?"

This uncompromising bluntness was heart-rending. The girl pouted, but was forced to accept the situation with a sigh.

"May the *nats* devour the man!" she snapped pettishly. "This is the tale. There is talk in the bazaar of one from Thibet, also of what he seeks. Is this a true word?"

Tha-Dun nodded.

"Then listen now. It is in my mind that this Mohammedan pig—" she hissed the epithet venomously—"that he is the man."

"That he is the man? What do you mean, girl?"

"What do I mean? Oh, stupid! That he has the holy image. Listen. He has been urging me to run away with him—" she could hear Tha-Dun's teeth gritting in the dark—"and has been boasting of all the money he will have as soon as he can sell a valuable statue from his own country."

Tha-Dun was visibly excited.

"Run away with him? The black dog! Sell a stat—— But the statue may be any statue."

"Nay, he speaks also of a jewel; further, that he is negotiating with Watts and Skeen, the curio dealers."

"Awah! If the English shop gets it, then is it indeed lost. The father of swine! Run away, indeed! Devil's breed! Girl, the Saya himself will thank you for this information."

"I don't want his old thanks," sulked the girl. "I want you to tell me about——"

"Nay, there is need of haste, and it is late. Run along home, girl; the Saya will surely send a message." And, "Sleep well, Mah-Shwé," he added as an afterthought, and strode away through the tall palm-trunks.

BACK in the shadow of the culvert the girl wept. But the man strode on, all oblivious, muttering, "Jackal's pup!" and "Black tree-ape!" The greater crime seemed to his thinking to be the proposal to run away. Suddenly a level voice broke in on his indignant mutterings.

"Meditating, my son?"

The old Abbot stood before him with inscrutable eyes.

So surprised was Tha-Dun that he forgot to make the required obeisance, and stood looking directly at the keen old face, instead of with bowed head to the ground. He could have lied and said yes, but as he looked into the honest, kindly eyes, the thought passed from him, and what he did say was, "No, Saya, not meditating." He awaited the next question with trepidation.

The old Abbot looked through him. He nodded and smiled.

"It is well, my son. Walk with me awhile."

They proceeded for some time in silence, the Abbot still nodding and smiling at intervals. Then, "Saya," blurted Tha-Dun. "About the holy one from Lhasa, and—and the commission you spoke of."

"Well, son, what of it?"

"I—I would fain take it up—if the Saya wills."

If Tha-Dun had expected surprise, he was disappointed, for the old man only nodded and smiled more than ever.

"It is well, my son. Have you pondered it well?"

The smile became an audible chuckle.

"Yes, Saya," said Tha-Dun, quite oblivious of the fact that his decision was of not more than two minutes' duration. He stole an amazed glance at the old man. The Saya seemed unwarrantably amused.

Presently, "It is well, my son," he beamed. "I am glad. We were indeed at a loss to find one fitted."

Then more soberly, "It is a difficult duty, and dangerous; and if you succeed—" with slow deliberation—"we shall be much beholden to you, and you may ask of us—what you will."

He added, "Even to promotion into the elder circle."

But the twinkle in his eyes seemed to indicate that he was not at all afraid that Tha-Dun would demand this great honor.

"Yes, Saya," said Tha-Dun, without enthusiasm, though the elder circle was usually attained only after ten years of meritorious study.

AND so it was arranged. Moung Tha-Dun was to go out and endeavor to locate the man whom the Lama had tracked, and whom he described as a big-built Mohammedan of fierce aspect; and

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having found him, to employ the best means his wit could suggest to get possession of the image.

There was no time to be lost. On the following morning Tha-Dun stepped out of the gates, a free man temporarily, governed only by his own discretion. He filled his lungs with deep drafts of clean air, which seemed to him sweeter than ever before, and worked his shoulders and arms with a new lease of life after the cramped atmosphere of the monastery.

He went straight to Mah-Shwé's house, "to get information," he said to himself. He hardly knew that he felt unnecessarily elated at the prospect of his visit; and he could not refrain, on his arrival, from standing in the roadway and shouting her name aloud after the manner of the more irresponsible youths when they went calling.

Mah-Shwé came to the window and squealed with delight. For Tha-Dun was in lay costume, the costume of his own people, the Shans, which permitted him, as an independent native, to carry a *dah* in British territory—his own beloved weapon with the chased-silver hilt, which had been hastily fetched overnight. The costume was the gift of a pious trader who had been roused from his bed at midnight by insistent priests.

"What is the matter, Tha-Dun?" she asked him, when she had hurried down with clattering slippers. "What has happened?"

Tha-Dun did not notice the little hand laid on his sleeve with anxious solicitude. He grinned and inhaled deeply again; he could not get enough of the free air.

"Happened, girl? Nothing. I come at the order of the Saya to look for the Mussulman. The black dog!"

"Lutf Ullah? But he has gone; fled to Lashio. It seems that he grew suspicious."

"To Lashio? Then he is making for the border. I must follow, and swiftly."

"But Tha-Dun, he is a desperate man; and he has in some way obtained possession of an English pistol with six shots. He showed it to me, swearing that he would return."

"Return!"

Rage filled Tha-Dun's breast.

"Return, will he?" he growled grimly. "But *one* of us shall return."

"But Tha-Dun, you can't go alone. You will need help. Did they not give you any companion from the *kyaung*?"

He sniffed scornfully.

"They?" was all he said.

"Then—then let me—— Take me with you."

"You, girl? That is plain madness. What could you do? You would only be in the way."

Mah-Shwé tried to insist; but she might have known that her suggestion was out of the question. However, the argument took up considerable time, and so she did not consider her efforts entirely wasted.

Finally Tha-Dun broke away just in time to catch the afternoon mail-train, which placed him in Lashio the same night. He was now in his own country. He knew the little town inside out, and felt sure that if his quarry were there, he would have no difficulty in finding him.

He repaired with a light heart to the house of some astonished relatives, and early on the following morning set out on his quest. He hunted up all the likely places where a stranger might stay, and made cautious inquiries of his many friends.

As he proceeded, he became obsessed with an uneasy feeling that some one was dogging his footsteps. He wheeled suddenly several times, but he could never succeed in surprising anybody who looked at all suspicious. Still, the feeling persisted, and, reckless as he was, he could not help feel a chill sensation of rising hair between the shoulder-blades.

Was he hunting his enemy, he asked himself—for strangely enough, he regarded the man with personal hostility—or was his enemy cunningly trailing him? And there was an almost irresistible impulse to hurry, and dodge behind corners.

And then suddenly, turning a corner, with his teeth set against panic, he came face to face with the man he sought. He shouted with the surprise of it, and instantly crouched in the characteristic panther-attitude. His eyes blazed greenish-red. The man started violently; then his jaw dropped, and he turned and fled incontinently. Tha-Dun whooped with fierce joy and leaped after him. After the first thrill of satisfaction at meeting this thing that he hated so unreasonably, came the secondary consideration that the image must be there too. Otherwise why would the man run? For he did not by any means look to be a coward.

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BUT at the very summit of his exultation Fate stepped in and gave him a cruel blow. A crowd of women got between them and, seeing a fierce great man bounding toward them, shrieked and ran hither and thither like sheep. Somebody was upset. Tha-Dun himself tripped and went sprawling.

A sickening fear shot through him that the man might escape, but when he was able to extricate himself and rise he just caught a glimpse of him rounding a far corner. He howled again, drew his *dah* in the excitement of the chase and leaped forward once more.

His impetuosity was his undoing. Lashio town is under British administration, and wild young men are not permitted to go careering through the streets with brandished weapons. A policeman barred his path, and it was ten precious minutes before he could induce the wretched minion to accept five rupees and let him go free.

Free! Yes, but distracted. It would be doubly, trebly difficult to find the man now. He beat his forehead and called himself all the fools in the universe and ran aimlessly round in the futile hope of meeting the Mohammedan again. Presently, however, he began to calm down and think consecutively; and with thought came hope.

If the man had fled from Mandalay to Lashio, surely his object had been to get within easy reach of the China border. And since he had now been discovered, surely he was making his way even now to the Keng Taw Ford, which would place him in Chinese territory.

The more Tha-Dun thought, the more certain he was. Finally he took the road to the Ford, running like a bloodhound with his nose almost to the ground as he searched and cast about for tracks. They were there, sure enough, every now and then; and he smiled grimly as he ran.

Yet here again, had he not known that his enemy was in front of him, he could have sworn that he was being followed. However, he had no time to worry about that now, much less to stop and investigate.

He came to the Ford. God was good! There were the tracks of naked feet, newly formed, and bearing heavy on the widely splayed toes. He plunged in without hesitation and began to wade, leaning strongly against the swift current which came well above his waist. He laughed aloud with sheer delight at the prospect of the coming conflict. He would surely get the fugitive now, and his soul leaped at the thought.

Crack! A wicked spurt of flame from the bushes fringing the opposite bank!

Tha-Dun threw up his arms, spun round, flopped into the water, and was whirled away by the rushing stream, leaving a thin trail of crimson behind him.

The bushes parted. An evil face leered from them in malignant triumph. Then the whole man emerged and peered carefully down stream under his shaded hand, still holding the ready revolver in the other. But there was no need. An arm showed for an instant and was whirled under again.

The Mussulman showed his teeth in an animal snarl, muttered "Burman dog!" then spat contemptuously after him and turned leisurely into the path once more.

Two hundred yards lower down Tha-Dun crawled out on to the bank, staggered a few paces, fell prone and lay still.

HE SHUDDERED back to a dazed semiconsciousness with a vague impression of cool hands tending him, and a familiar voice sobbing his name. His eyes opened dreamily, and then stared wide in incredulous amazement.

"Mah-Shwé! How did you get here?"

"Oh, Tha-Dun! I thought you were dead. I—I followed you from Mandalay, and—and then in Lashio. But you ran so fast I could not keep up."

"Followed?"

A misty recollection began to form. He put his hand to his head to collect his buzzing thoughts, and found a wet bandage.

"Followed! So it was you, then, all the time? But I looked back, and never saw you."

There was interrogation in the tone. The girl looked away and blushed; and then he noticed that she was dressed as a Burman boy. This girl was amazing!

"What did you follow me for?" he asked in astonishment.

"I—I thought you might need help, and I was afraid, and—and—— Oh, I thought he had killed you."

"Nay, it is an old trick to fall at the shot. It was but a graze, but it stunned me. How long have I lain?"

"But ten minutes since I heard the shot."

"Good! Then I can get him yet. But I must lie a while to recover my strength."

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"You are not going after him again, Tha-Dun?"

"Aye, but I am, girl!"

The resolute jaw shot forward aggressively.

"This man is my enemy, my private foe. Do you understand?"

"Why, Tha-Dun?"

"Why, because——"

He was unable to proceed; there seemed to be no reason to give.

"Nay, I know not," he concluded lamely. "But I hate him."

Then fiercely: "It is enough; I follow. And you; you go back to Lashio. This jungle is no place for little boy-girls to wander in alone."

"Nay. I come with you, Tha-Dun."

"You—go—back to Lashio."

This man was stern and domineering. No man had ever treated her so before. She wept; but presently she went meekly, taking his promise that he would come straight to her with the news on his return.

"And *I* will surely return," he said grimly. "Not the Mussulman dog."

Then, after assisting the girl across the Ford, he took up the chase again with deadly pertinacity. The path beyond the Ford led to a comic-opera Chinese outpost, where three obsolete soldiers in archaic lacquered armor and prehistoric flint-lock guns held guard over nobody knew what, and conscientiously earned their pay—which they never got—by summarily arresting everybody who crossed the boundary, later allowing the prisoners to ransom themselves on the confiscation of such valuables as they had been unable successfully to conceal.

The tracks on this path showed a clean heel and toe, with an occasional slur of a dragging foot. There had clearly been no running here. Tha-Dun smiled in happy anticipation and sped smoothly on.

He came upon his quarry sooner than he had expected, strolling carelessly along. Here again his impetuosity got the better of him. He raised his hand to his mouth and whooped a wild view-halloo. The Mohammedan whirled round and his eyes boggled with fear at the sight of the man whom he had killed swooping down on him like an incarnate spirit of revenge. He turned and ran, and the fear of death gave him wings; but even so, he was no match for the lean-hipped mountaineer. His terrified glances over his shoulder showed the fearsome Nemesis gaining at every stride.

In the frenzy of despair he halted long enough to draw his revolver and shoot. Tha-Dun dodged in among the trees and howled delight. The battle-lust was on him, and he took a fierce joy even in being fired at. He leaped and yelled exultingly between the trunks with each shot.

"FIVE!"

He counted them. And one before; the gun must be empty now. He dashed out again and swept down on his foe. Then he noticed for the first time that the Mohammedan carried a long *dah* similar to his own. Good! Then there would be a fight after all. The man drew desperately, and struck—a wild, useless blow, with no reach to it. Tha-Dun yelled again and whirled his blade around with the full sweep of both arms.

Clean and true, on the juncture of the collar bone it landed with a heavy *chuck*. There had been no fight at all.

And then he looked up with hungry eyes and saw the three Chinese soldiers, who had been attracted by the sound of the firing, standing in a group and making hostile preparations. His fighting appetite had been only whetted by the disappointment, and he cared not what odds were against him. He growled and crouched waiting; but the three drew back from the glare in his eyes, chattering excitedly.

"You have killed on our ground," said one of them at length. "And you must be arrested."

"So?"

Tha-Dun muttered ominously.

"Come, then, and arrest me."

But the three displayed no eagerness about tackling this fierce great man with the panther-eyes glaring behind the dripping *dah*.

Tha-Dun looked long and menacing. Then, as they made no move, still growling, he felt in the man's breast. There was a rice paper package, small and heavy; obviously what he sought. He tore off a corner with his teeth, and from the hole shone out a glint of gold.

His only comment was a grunted "Hngh." Then he looked belligerently at the soldiers.

"Still want to come and arrest me?" Tha-Dun grinned invitingly, almost regretfully. There was no move. He grunted

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again, contemptuously. What kind of men were these who refused such a gorgeous offer? He waited, still with some faint hope. Then, shaking his head sadly, he turned his back and strode down the pathway.

The same afternoon found him seated opposite Mah-Shwé in the down train to Mandalay. There had been a long silence. Tha-Dun was busy with a storm of thoughts which he could not understand. His short reprieve from the monastery was come to a close, and his heart ached at the thought.

But there was something more than the mere prospect of return troubling him—something he could not fathom. He had brought his quest to a triumphant close, but he felt no special elation over it; the greater satisfaction lay in the fact that he had settled hand to hand with the Mussulman, the man who would have eloped with this girl.

And the girl! He could not keep from thinking how bravely she had followed him, and how solicitously she had tended his hurt. Then came the thought of his return once more, and the triumphant welcome that awaited him; but it brought no happiness. He had succeeded, and he might ask what he would—— Well, what *did* he desire?

"Tha-Dun!"

Mah-Shwé suddenly broke in on his reverie.

"What are you going to do now?"

"Go back to Mandalay, of course," came the startled answer.

"And then?"

"Take you to your home."

"And then?"

"Go back to the *kyaung*, of course."

Mah-Shwé sighed. She was very quiet and subdued.

It was dark when Tha-Dun left her at her door and set out for the monastery. His mind was in a whirl of strange emotions. The nearer he approached the slower he walked. In some vague way he connected the *kyaung* with the end of all things earthly. And then, suddenly, at the very gate, when he seemed about to shut the world out of his life, forever this time, it broke in on him like a devastating flood. He gasped with the wonder of it.

He had discovered what he desired.

THE announcement of his arrival brought him an immediate audience with the Abbot. It was short and conclusive. He presented the package with bowed head and in silence.

The old man did not even open it.

"So!" he said softly. "You have succeeded, my son. It is well. We will thank you as is fitting later."

This signified that the audience was at an end; but Tha-Dun stayed, shuffling his feet nervously.

"Well?" inquired the old man, with an assumption of innocence. Tha-Dun could not see that his eyes were bubbling over with merriment.

He took his courage in both hands.

"The Saya said—spoke of—of a reward."

"Yes. I said you might ask what you would. And what is it that you will, my son?"

"My freedom, Saya!" blurted Tha-Dun desperately, and went on hurriedly. "I have another quest; a private one."

The Abbot showed not an atom of surprise. Instead he nodded and smiled and chuckled delightedly.

"And your quest is new, and urgent?"

Tha-Dun was astounded.

"The Saya knows?"

The old man smiled benignly.

"Son, it did not need your asking to tell me that you were not fitted for our life; else had I not given you the opportunity to earn the reward of what you would. Go now, son, and take my blessing; you can return later, having accomplished your quest, for the necessary ceremonies."

Tha-Dun broke through the crowd of waiting *hypongyis*, who were dying with curiosity, with the hurried promise, "Later," to all their eager questions, and raced whooping most indecorously through the gate where they might not follow.

He turned and yelled again in the sheer exuberance of his youth at the astonished priests.

Then he went straight to the house of Mah-Shwé.

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DYNAMITE ED'S FIASCO

by BARTON WOOD CURRIE

I

SAD Sidney Van Deusen turned to the mirror back of the long bar of the O. K. Hotel and addressed his own dismal presentment in plaintive phrase:

"A feller might as well talk to hisself in the deaf an' dumb language as try an' get a word out o' that young Smilax person when he's readin' about gold mines; an' if he on'y knew it he an' that half portion gun drummer, Rem Leaf, would never have got a look-in at that Yellow Horse mine if it hadn't been for a gent named Van Deusen. Why——"

Just then the roving, ever-weeping eye of Sad Sidney focused upon the window of the barroom that looked out upon Stillwater's main and only artery of traffic.

Sam Smilax was sitting directly in front of this window with his feet up on the ledge. Young Sam was profoundly absorbed in a full page advertisement in a newspaper which told of a marvelous mine that had been opened in the Stillwater District by the Blue Square Syndicate. As he read the fluent phrase of wildcat prophecy and mendacious statement, his face puckered with anger and his lips contracted.

In a way of speaking, "his collar had begun to smoke," when a sharp click on the window pane in front of him caused him to bob up his head and glance quickly over the page of the newspaper. It was a badly blurred window-pane, owing to the constant beating of gray alkali dust against its surface. Through this blur it was impossible to identify any object without, except as a splotchy shadow.

It was an indefinite shadow with the sharp glare of the forenoon sun behind it that was apparently responsible for the sound that had caught Sam Smilax's attention and the *rat-tap* had scarcely fixed his regard when scraggly blue letters began to leap upon the surface of the glass, sharply defined in the opaque gray coating.

THE wielder of the piece of blue chalk built his letters generously, despite his frantic haste, but it failed to occur to him that his message would read backward to those within the hotel bar. As the first word formed like this —KCUD— Sam Smilax's agile brain snapped and sputtered in a cross circuit of puzzlement. Compounder Van Deusen, however, reading through the mirror with his back turned diagonally to the window read in a flash—Duck. Sad Sidney had received a multitude of similar warnings in his time and as he read the word aloud to his sole companion in the long, slim barroom, he glided to his trap-door cellar exit, which he had rigged back of the counter.

By a simple spring device the mournful bartender had made it possible to duck gunfire after the manner of the devil in the

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pantomime. All he had to do after stepping upon the surface of the trap was to jerk a rope under the bar, when—presto! he shot through the floor and descended a slantwise chute into a cushion of loose alfalfa.

Sam Smilax did not turn his head as Sad Sidney read the scrawled lettering and exclaimed, "Duck!" The exclamation furnished the cue Sam had been striving for, and he continued to read the warning backward as the blue chalk wrought on until the window bore this inscription:

FFO-DEWAS—KCUD
DNIHEB NUGTOHS

Sad Sidney read only so far as "SAWED-OFF SHOTGUN," when he jerked the cord of his trap-door and noiselessly vanished. As the word "BEHIND" threw young Sam into a fear that a charge of lead slugs and steel filings was likely to blow off the top of his head if not his entire head, he leaped up from his chair and looked back along the length of the room. The rear door was still shut, but it occurred to Sam's acute senses that a hand was fumbling with the knob. Acting upon a sudden inspiration he snatched off his gray Stetson, yanked his knife from his belt and pinned his hat to the head-rest of the cane-backed chair by driving the blade through the brim. From the dim rear recess of the room it looked as if some one were still sitting there with his hat tipped forward over his brow.

The young man waited barely an instant to adjust the hat and then slanted for the doorway to the right of the chair that let out into the slit between partitions that served as the hotel corridor.

He had scarcely achieved his exit when the door in the shadowy end of the bar-room opened on a crack, and inch by inch swung in so as to admit the head of a man that was more than three-quarters masked by a ragged felt hat pulled down to the ears. The head was swiftly followed by a thick-set, undersized body with peculiarly humped shoulders. Through the gloom of the ill lighted room he had glimpsed the hat and also noted the absence of Sad Sidney. He crept forward with the swift stealth of a rat.

This spider-footed individual wore a pea-jacket about two sizes too large for him and from under the ample shelter of this garment he swung out a shotgun, the barrel of which had been sawed off within a foot of the breech.

That the assassin's tool was not unfamiliar to the big fists of the man who wielded it, was manifest the instant he unlimbered. In the same motion that brought the gun out from under the pea-jacket the assassin shouldered it and fired. He handled the unwieldy weapon as swiftly and surely as if it has been a derringer.

BOTH barrels flashed long jets of flame and poured about three pounds of metal through the back of the chair Sam Smilax had abandoned. Chair-back, Stetson and even Sam's knife were blown out through the window in a pulverized mass that rattled against the walls and windows of the shacks across the street. A Chinese laundryman who was trotting by in the middle of the street, talking to himself, turned his head just in time to get a mouthful of glass, lead, felt and chair-back, whereupon he scuttled out of the camp of Stillwater on a perpetual Marathon, so far as any reports have ever been received to the contrary.

Whether or not the assassin had counted on the recoil of his ordnance to assist in his exit or whether he had loaded the wicked piece of hardware with more than the customarily generous charge, the fact remains that he went spinning back to the door he had come through as if he had been hurled from a catapult. The gun had fallen to the floor. From its barrels there still coiled thick twists of smoke. The force of his collision with the door had slammed it shut, and the rebound from the shock had brought him to his knees, stunned and bleeding. Sputtering oaths, he scrambled up and darted for the door, pausing only for a quick glance over his shoulder. He had recovered his shotgun and seized the door-knob, when he was treated to another jar, totally unexpected and fully as potent as the recoil from the double-barreled discharge. The door swung in with terrific force, smashing him in the face and at the same time sweeping him off his feet.

As he staggered back and toppled over on his back he looked up into the face of the man he had come to slay. Sam Smilax came through the door at him in a single bound and landed on his chest.

What happened in the next few moments was a complete mystery to the object of

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young Sam's furious attentions. First he felt as if a two-ton rock had smitten him. Then he seemed to be crashing through space, bumping hard places with his back. A voice smote dully on his befuddled senses:

"Hey, you Sad Sidney down there, jump on this as soon as it hits the bottom. It's the thing that shot that gun off. I'll be down directly I get some rope from my room."

Sam had dragged the mass of semiconscious thug behind the bar, opened the trap and shouted his warning. He had gripped the bundle by the throat with a thumb on the windpipe and he had banged the frowzy red head against every object he could establish contact with in order to make certain that Compounder Van Deusen would have no great difficulty in handling what came down to him.

But as it turned out there was a kick or two left in the battered object that came down the chute and mingled in the alfalfa with the long legs and arms of the cautious and trouble-dodging Sad Sidney. The cellar of the O. K. Hotel was not a spacious apartment—something like 14 x 16 feet square—and was piled with crates, boxes, odds and ends of planks and multitudes of bottles. Just as soon as contact was established between the tall compounder and his down-the-chute visitor there developed a terrific contest between the short and long of it, and the long of it was getting rather the worst of the mix-up when Sam Smilax let himself down the trap with a lantern in one hand and a coil of rope in the other.

NOW, while all this takes minutes in the telling, the action was compressed within a fleeting space of seconds. There was still a thin film of gunpowder smoke fogging the atmosphere of the barroom when Sam Smilax descended to succor Sad Sidney Van Deusen. Nor was the air entirely clear when Heinrich Volksfericht, better known as Crazy the Dutch, the new proprietor of the patchwork Stillwater hostelry, crossed the street from Antonio Lucca's barber shop to resume command of his premises.

Heinrich Volksfericht was a Teuton of Falstaffian build and fierce facial aspect. His Kaiser Wilhelm mustaches were warlike bristles and Nature had provided him with a terrible voice. He had been tending bar in Fallon when the opportunity came to him to buy the O. K. Hotel from a certain group of heirs, and he was therefore not unfamiliar with the possibilities of Nevada strenuosities. He had served his time in the Prussian cavalry and was no coward when it came to a pinch, but at the same time he saw no nourishment in inviting leaden pellets to repose in his vast anatomy. He was both gun-handy and gun-shy, with a wily cunning that had conserved for him an unpunctured skin.

Seated in the barber's chair facing the street, mine host had seen the hotel window blow out and had heard the roaring discharge of the sawed-off shotgun.

"Himmel!" he roared. "Vas ist? Dot Sat Sitney vas plown him to notings. Tony, gif me some hartvare. I vill inwestigate."

The barber unlimbered a pair of rusty .44s and handed them to Herr Volksfericht, but Crazy The Dutch did not rush forth precipitately. With one of his little pig eyes focused on his hotel he made a show of closely inspecting the barber's smoke wagons. Then, very slowly, he heaved his great bulk down from the chair until he stood solidly on his feet.

"What for you wait?" asked Tony the barber, who had armed himself with a Winchester to cover the approaches to his shop.

Tony suggested that his customer go outside before he opened fire, mentioning casually that the camp glazier had been buried only a month since.

"Somepody can be coming ouid yet," growled Volksfericht. "Aber so I pring him down."

Then he inched his way through the narrow entrance of the barber shop, suddenly lurching into the street with a terrible yell, waving his .44s wildly and scattering the populace of Stillwater in all directions. Before he quite reached the door of the barroom he emptied the contents of one of the .44s through the window-frame, demanding between shots that Sat Sitney come out and report to him.

Scores of armed men looked on from windows and doors, but none ventured to follow Crazy the Dutch. When at last he rushed through the doorway and swept the door off its hinges he had satisfied himself that the barroom was empty of any living creature. Once inside, however, he roared a challenge for the benefit of listening villagers, waved his guns some more and

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leaped up and down till the flimsy little structure rocked on its beams.

WHILE all these heavy heroics were being enacted by Crazy the Dutch above ground, Sam Smilax was accomplishing his grim purpose in the cellar. Holding his lantern above his head, he had shot the chute and landed squarely on his feet a short distance from where Sad Sidney was still embroiled with his red-headed adversary, who had fastened his teeth in the compounder's shoulder and was hanging on with a bulldog grip.

"Just a minute, Sidney," cried Sam as he found a hook in the ceiling and suspended the lamp. In two jumps he had cleared the clutter of boxes and separated the antagonists by the simple process of choking the red-headed person and planting his knee in his stomach.

"Now I've got him, Sidney," Sam gurgled as he tightened his hold. "Take this rope and loop it around his shoulders till you've got his arms woven fast."

"Why not kill him first?" interposed Sad Sidney, ferociously. "He ate most of my shoulder off."

"Shut up and rope him," snapped Sam. "He was only hired for this job and I want his story."

Sad Sidney went savagely to work tying up the prisoner, throwing all his sinewy strength into the twisting of knots that cut into the flesh. When the last knot was tied Sam relaxed his grip and propped the trussed victim against a box. As he did so, Sad Sidney got his first glimpse of the captive's face, whereas he cried out:

"Dynamite Ed of Seven Troughs, or I'll eat rhyolite!"

"Bet your blood—the same!" snarled the prisoner. "And that's as far as the story goes."

"Dynamite Ed, eh?" exclaimed Sam Smilax. "Well, Dynamite Ed, your hand's called. What have you got—a Blue Square time card?"

"Blue Square nothin'," sneered Dynamite Ed. "I gun on my own hook."

"Well, what's your quarrel with me?" asked Sam.

Dynamite Ed did not reply, for at that moment Crazy the Dutch was engaged in challenging the smoke-wreaths in the barroom above and doing a three-hundred-pound bear dance.

"Don't mind that noise," said Sam after a moment. "It's only a German earthquake. Crazy the Dutch is inviting the dead and wounded to fight. Now tell me; what's our quarrel?"

"None o' your——"

He choked back the rest of it as Sam whipped out a .38 and laid it against his chest.

"Look here, Dynamite Ed, or Shotgun Jerry, or whatever dirty game you're named after, I'm giving you till I count seven to say Blue Square. One, two, three, four, five——"

"Blue Square," gasped the assassin as he felt the muzzle of the .38 crowding through his ribs and read the meaning glitter in Sam's eyes.

"Name the Stillwater committee—and how much did you get in advance?" demanded Sam.

"Committee of three—Lon Ryan, C. K. Blondin and the Black Spaniard, Fernandez; price, one thousand down and two more after the inquest."

Dynamite Ed growled this out reluctantly, showing all his pointed yellow teeth.

"Did they mention Rem Leaf in the contract?" pressed Sam, eagerly.

"No," snorted the prisoner. "Said they'd bury him personal on the Hawthorne Trail when he comes along with his new ore trailer this afternoon. They're going out on a buckboard to lay ambush back of the Blue Boulder. Guess that's the full tale and it's my first squeal. Now, what happens to me?"

"That'll depend on the truth of what you're telling and a few future facts and happenings," said Sam. "When does the buckboard party set out to get Rem Leaf?"

"Soon after noon, provided you're dead, Mr. Smilax. Otherwise the excursion is postponed," answered Dynamite Ed, with a twisted smile.

YOUNG Sam did some quick thinking and then turned to Sad Sidney, who had been heeding the dialogue with his customary air of gloomy indifference.

"Mr. Van Deusen," began Sam, sharply, "I'm dead. Climb up the chute and notify Crazy the Dutch that you stowed two sets of remains down cellar. Your story is that you winged Dynamite Ed after this gentleman got me with his chewed-off cannon.

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Then go out and find Philander McPike, the camp embalmer. Whisper him the truth, not forgetting the Blue Square Syndicate. Tell him additional to bring down here two ample tin-lined hickory ulsters to accommodate this gentleman and myself."

"Hold on," choked out Dynamite Ed, his freckled face tinging a pale green. "You're not a going to bury a feller alive, are you? I'll go the limit for you forty ways if you'll call that off! I'll get the whole Blue Square Syndicate for you with a can of black powder if you say the word! Or if you've got to square the card, plug me here and get it over quick. Why——"

"Cut out the whimper, you terrible assassin," broke in Sam. "You're going to get all the chance in the world to square the card, and the job won't be under ground either.

"Now, Sidney, to go on where I left off, tell McPike to bring those hickory ulsters and a kit of tools down into this cellar, likewise a pair of extra emergency guns. Yes, loaded. We also want four horses and a trundle truck waiting at the door. Official inquests are now held in Hawthorne. Talk all these funeral details out loud, Sidney, so the Blue Square outfit can hear, and hustle your pins so we can head off this ambush at the Blue Boulder. That blackmailing, claim jumping syndicate of stock jobbing highbinders doesn't know the Nevada country and its real folks quite as keen as they suspect and the bulletins will be coming in to that effect before sunset. Now move, Sidney, and move spry."

CRAZY THE DUTCH was still waving his guns and defying the bare walls when his compounder suddenly bobbed up out of the trap behind the bar and saluted. "It's me—Sidney—boss. The dead is down cellar."

Crazy the Dutch dropped his arms and looked as if he'd glimpsed a ghost.

"Who sind—de dead?" gurgled the German, tottering to the bar and grabbing the rail for support. "Id ain't dot poy, Sammy, vot? I gif him varnings; I gif him varnings."

Sad Sidney nodded his head and poured himself five fingers of nose paint, which he slid down his ostrich throat without swallowing.

"Yes, boss," he reeled off as the acid braced him, letting the tears flow freely from his chronically dripping eyes. "Dynamite Ed guns him from the back door with that sawed-off affair on the floor, and while he's still shooting I get Dynamite Ed with my bulldog Colts. They was both cold and I slid 'em into the cellar so as not to muss up the place. Now, boss, I'm on my way to McPike's."

Sad Sidney vaulted the high counter with a kangaroo jump and lurched through the doorway just as a crowd of men surged across the street clamoring for information. On the outskirts of the crowd Sidney caught sight of Fernandez, the Black Spaniard, holding close confab with Lon Ryan and C. K. Blondin. For their benefit, Sidney yelled over his shoulder. "The Blue Square outfit got Sam Smilax."

The Black Spaniard flashed his teeth in a gleaming smile. With his two pals he backed into the hole-in-the-wall office of the Yellow Horse Syndicated Mines, the tinsel and rouge corporation he and his gang had built on the reputation of the Smilax-Leaf bonanza, after purchasing worthless adjoining claims to the Yellow Horse Mine. They had opened war with the two young owners of the Yellow Horse when the latter refused to come in on the wildcat stock seller and advertised throughout Nevada that the syndicated mines had no connection with the Yellow Horse, which consisted of a very lovely vein of tufa rock which could show yellow only with the aid of five coats of paint.

This wildcat syndicate, however, was no little fly-by-night institution. On the contrary it was a federated gang of swindlers and bad men who had been operating successfully for years wherever there was a gold or silver mining boom. They owned a string of little Western newspapers and they advertised extensively in the big dailies of the large cities. Terrorism and bribery were their chief tools employed and they boasted that they owned every public official in two of the biggest mining counties of Nevada. The fact that they spent liberally and advertised widely had made them welcome in many camps where their methods were only vaguely understood.

SAM SMILAX had gone into the mining game with his eyes open to many of its shortcomings. He knew that wildcatters flocked to every boom camp like so many jackals and that the breed had

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long been tolerated because the better element as individuals were too busy to pay much attention to them. He had not been aware, however, of the federation or trust scheme employed by the Blue Square Syndicate and it came as a big surprise to him after acquiring an interest in a real mine to be notified that he would have to smile upon the swindling operations of the syndicate or be run out of Nevada. To be run out of Nevada was a general term which in the majority of cases included sudden death.

The oily and jewel-ornamented Lon Ryan had first conveyed to young Sam that the Syndicate desired to use the name of his mine for advertising purposes in a highly garnished wildcat venture. A liberal salary would be paid Sam to keep his mouth shut and not ask too many questions. The blond and boyish C. K. Blondin, onetime bucket-shop tout of San Francisco, conveyed the same information to Remsen Halliday Leaf, Sam's partner. There was a Smilax-Leaf conference which resulted in the inditing of an open letter to the local committee of the Blue Square Syndicate. The letter stated that any agent of the syndicate who permitted himself to browse in the vicinity of the Yellow Horse Mine would be shot on sight. Then followed the advertisements denouncing the Yellow Horse Syndicated Mines.

Now, although the Syndicate had rather enjoyed the letter warning them to keep off of the Yellow Horse premises, they could find nothing to smile at in the advertisements that flared forth in the Nevada newspapers they did not own. The directors of the Syndicate held a close indoor meeting, at which it was voted to issue burial certificates in the names of Samuel Smilax and R. H. Leaf.

Therefore, the announcement made by Sad Sidney that Sam Smilax had been got, following so swiftly after the roaring explosion in the O. K. Hotel, was mighty good news to the Ryan-Fernandez-Blondin committee and they retired to their little office to exchange felicitations. The fact that the bartender had mentioned the name of the Syndicate in connection with the getting of Sam Smilax caused them not the least concern. Their lawyers would attend to all such insignificant details. Of course, there would be a few hours of excitement in Stillwater and there might be some expression of public indignation over the manner of young Smilax's passing. No better time could be chosen to slip out of the camp and waylay the funny little chap who had earned his living peddling automatic popguns before he turned mine owner.

The elated trio waited in their office until they saw Philander McPike return to the hotel with the trundle truck and the pair of hickory ulsters the "slain" Samuel had ordered. Then they let themselves out of a little back door and went up to the Bon Ton stables for their buckboard. They did not leave Stillwater by the main Hawthorne Trail, preferring to avoid the rabble in the center of the town. Their course was through the mining district to the south and thence to a cross-cut that picked up the Hawthorne Trail several miles out of camp. Their agents had informed them when they could expect to encounter Rem Leaf, alone, in his buckboard in the vicinity of the Blue Boulder.

II

MEIN Host Heinrich Volksfericht declared the bar of the O. K. Hotel closed for the morning so as to permit Philander McPike to have a free hand in his dismal task under ground. While genuinely grieved over the decease of the young man he had taken such a fancy to, Crazy the Dutch nevertheless found a grim joy in waving the curious from his premises with the ominous pair of weapons he had borrowed from Tony the barber. As for himself, he suffered from no morbid curiosity and did not suggest accompanying McPike and Sad Sidney down the cellar chute. Had he done so it is very likely that he would have remained there, bound and gagged.

McPike and Compounder Van Deusen sought no aid in the heavy work before them. In less than an hour they had loaded the ponderous caskets on the trundle truck. If any of the scores of silent watchers in the street noticed the fore-and-aft and broadside portholes that had been bored in the caskets there was no public mention of the fact. By the time McPike had whipped up his four-horse team and headed for the Hawthorne Trail the tragedy had passed into the ancient history of the camp and Crazy the Dutch and Sad Sidney were serving drinks with both hands and furnishing lurid descriptions of the slaughter.

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Philander McPike's four-horse funeral cortège had not proceeded far along the Hawthorne Trail beyond the scattered outlying shacks of Stillwater when complaints began to issue from the slim wooden jacket that contained Dynamite Ed. When Sad Sidney reached McPike's office and made known Sam Smilax's wishes it just happened that McPike was all out of stout sizes. It had therefore been necessary to exert force to encase the short and chunky dynamiter and sawed-off shotgun user in the slender casket. His bonds had been released and he was provided with ample air, but these concessions furnished only temporary relief.

Even while McPike was screwing on the lid, Dynamite Ed commenced to groan and threaten to make a row. A long, slim knife driven through one of the air-holes by McPike had at last obtained silence, but even the dread of this knife wore off by the time the trundle truck began to take the bumps on the desert Trail.

"Let me out or kill me quick," wailed Dynamite Ed. "My ribs are crackin' one by one an' there ain't room for a dog to pant in."

The agony of this appeal was lost on McPike, and he was just about to prick the complainer back to silence with his long, slim knife when Sam Smilax spoke from his adjoining hickory envelope.

"If we're out on the Trail I guess you'd better let us both out," said Sam. "We can climb inside again before we reach the ambush party."

But as luck would have it, three of the undertaker's four spirited nags took it into their heads at that moment to run away, bolting off the trail and heading for a platter-flat dry lake about a mile away. McPike was an able charioteer and the trundle truck was heavy, but the horses were fresh and husky and when they all bolted together there was no stopping them. The desert at that point was flat enough but here and there the ground was broken with reefs of rock and corrugated with gullies.

Sometimes it seemed that only one wheel was touching, and then again all four would come down with a crash. As the two hickory ulsters were not tied on, it was only a matter of a score of high-rolling thank-you-marms before they were both jolted off. Dynamite Ed was the first to leave the truck, landing head first in a rocky gully and passing off into a deep sleep. Next Sam was bounced off and his hardwood envelope split seven ways so that his head and legs were free while the remainder of his body remained still encased. By the time he had gained his feet and plucked some of the splinters out of him McPike and his four-in-hand were half a mile away. The gruesome surprise he had planned for the ambush party seemed to be sadly wrecked.

MEANTIME the Stillwater committee of the Blue Square Syndicate was proceeding without mishap and eating up the Trail to the Blue Boulder, a mammoth chunk of bluish quartz in the midst of an archipelago of smaller boulders. It was just the sort of ambush that Old Cochise delighted in when he and his bloodthirsty Apaches held their reign of terror in southern Arizona.

When the buckboard struck into the main Hawthorne Trail from the roundabout path they had followed, the Black Spaniard began to unlimber his artillery, which consisted of two blue-metal .45s with extraordinarily long barrels.

"A Winchester has nothing on these for long range," said Fernandez, with his customary wolf grin, "and once I get a bead on that peanut size partner of the late Mr. Smilax he'll never know who wished him into heaven."

The Black Spaniard's pretty wit drew hearty laughter from Blondin and Ryan. They were in high good humor by the time they reached the Blue Boulder and scanned the empty circle of horizon. Had their line of vision extended a few miles beyond the ribbon of hills to the northwest they would have seen an amazing four horse runaway spilling caskets over the tailboard. And had their line of vision extended about five miles beyond the eastern horizon they would have—— But wait.

As the ambush party hid their team behind the Blue Boulder and disposed themselves behind a pair of adjoining rocks that Nature had erected as shooting turrets commanding a stretch of the Trail for several hundred rods to the eastward, Lon Ryan said to Blondin:

"You're dead certain this little ex-peddler of toy pistols brings in that new ore trailer alone? It might muss up our game if he carried a driver and a consignment of passengers."

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"I got it dead straight," retorted Blondin, "that he turns down three offers to drive the trailer, announcing that it's his special party to drive a team of six mules. He also sent a letter to Sam Smilax that was. That letter came in on last night's stage and was opened in transit. My dope is dead certain, in which case we only got an hour or two to wait."

"But what happens," said Ryan, "if that McPike funeral carriage comes along and goes by before the ore trailer makes the boulder? That little cuss'll turn right back for Hawthorne, and he's got a lot of friends over there who'll come over to make trouble."

"Oh, chop that worry bleat," snorted Blondin. "McPike had a four hours' job ahead of him when we left and he won't be along here before sundown. I'm glad that cry-face bartender potted Dynamite Ed, for it saves us $2,000 and buries a possible witness."

THE ambush hadn't been laid quite sixty minutes when a dot on the distant thread of trail roused the hopes of that brave trio of bad men that their victim approached. The Black Spaniard got ready his long-stemmed shooters and his two companions drew their briefer-barreled smoke wagons. While they had agreed to allow Fernandez to open the long-range batteries they insisted that they have some end of the sport, if it were only to kill a pair of mules.

As the far-away dot drew nearer and increased in bigness the keen eyes of the Black Spaniard made out the string of mules in advance and he announced with enthusiasm—

"That's the ore trailer all right."

A little later he added with a chuckle, "and the little cuss is all alone, driving from the high seat with the sun in his eyes and a smother of dust winding up for his shroud. With this rock for a gun-rest I can get him at three hundred yards or I never plugged a bull's eye blindfold."

The mule team was coming along at a leisurely walk, plunging their hoofs in the dust of the Trail and raising a gray cloud that sifted back over the ore trailer like clouds of steam. Through this dust cloud the figure of a man was soon apparent, sitting stiffly on the high driving seat. About three hundred yards from the Blue Boulder there was a bend in the Trail that would swing the ore trailer around so that the Black Spaniard could shoot diagonally at the driver and not over the heads of the mule team.

As the quarry approached, the three men held their gaze with savage intensity. The Black Spaniard was crouched behind his screen of rock with his eye glued to the gun-sight and just as the mule team swung round the curve, kicking up an even thicker pall of smoke, he let go. The figure on the seat did not stir and the mules came on. Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! The Black Spaniard pumped out four more slugs, cursing the still immobile figure on the seat.

"You cross-eyed Dago," fumed Blondin, and raised the weapon to fire. As he did so something whizzed over his shoulder and crashed against the side of Fernandez' head, toppling him over and sprawling him out on his face. And before Blondin could turn his head to look, a weight that was far from inanimate landed on his shoulders and bore him to the ground.

Lon Ryan managed to turn round as these calamities accrued to his pals and all the coward that was in him came out in white splotches on his face when he looked into the barrel of a Winchester and saw behind it the huge bulk of Sandstorm Smith, a young gentleman widely known in Nevada for his sunny disposition and his precision in handling hardware.

"That's right, Mr. Ryan," said Sandstorm Smith in cooing accents, while he showed all his teeth in an expansive smile. "Drop all that superfluous artillery on the carpet. Also, I would be obliged if you would stand over there against the Blue Boulder with your arms above your head. If you twiddle a finger I'll shoot it off. Easy there, Rem," pursued Mr. Sandstorm Smith. "Don't be so rough with that blond person or we may have to waste our energy in digging a hole for him. And as for you, Fernandez, you don't need to play dead any longer and try and inch your fingers over to that pocket rifle. I dislike homicide intensely, but if you get hold of that gun I'll have to consider you as a mad dog and plug you through the back. Turn over and sit up quick."

The Black Spaniard turned over and sat up as if he were operated with a spring. At the same time Remsen Halliday Leaf let go of C. K. Blondin's neck and stopped

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hammering with the barrel of a small but very hard weapon.

"That's right, Rem," ran along Sandstorm Smith. "I've got them all covered. You better step over to the trail and quiet that bunch of mules. Also bring over that dummy driver and see if there are any holes in him. I've heard this Fernandez person is a rare shooter at stuffed objects and wooden targets."

WHILE Rem Leaf was untangling the mules and taking down the straw man that had been rigged on the seat, his mild-mannered though forceful friend had persuaded the Black Spaniard and the battered Blondin to range themselves alongside the craven Ryan. Fernandez had hesitated a moment, whereupon a heavy boot had smitten him with tremendous force.

Sandstorm Smith followed up the kick with the soft remark:

"I used to boot the pigskin once, Mr. Fernandez, and in my boyhood days I was a bit of a Southpaw. You may have noticed—or it may have escaped your attention—that I imparted a sharp inshoot to that pretty red rock I bounced off your honorable dome. Well, Rem, what are we going to do with the board of directors of the Yellow Horse Syndicated Mines—that is, with the Stillwater quorum of the board?"

"If anything has happened to Sam Smilax," responded Leaf, removing his goggles to dust them on his trousers, "I'll go into Stillwater and bring out a jury from the Mine. Then we'll give them one of the quickest trials on record."

At the mention of Sam Smilax, Lon Ryan began to shake and his teeth to chatter. Suddenly he blurted out:

"I swear to God I voted against it, Mr. Leaf. It was Fernandez' plan and he and Blondin sent for Dynamite Ed."

Fernandez turned upon Ryan with a snarl and was reaching for his throat when a bullet from Sandstorm Smith's Winchester sang over his head. As the Black Spaniard shot up his hands again and stiffened his back to the boulder Smith said:

"Mr. Fernandez, it is bad form to interrupt a gentleman when he is talking. Now Mr. Ryan, go on and tell us about Dynamite Ed. I suppose it was the sawed-off shotgun again, though from what I have heard of young Mr. Smilax I doubt if Ed made good."

"Y-y-y-y-yes h-h-h-he d-d-d-did," chattered Ryan, "though I secretly sent a warning to Smilax to look out. I can prove that by Jimmy Fife, my office boy."

"And I suppose you are perfectly willing to testify against your friends," sneered Sandstorm Smith. "Anything to save your dirty hide. But before we get to that will you explain how you happened to be out here gunning for my friend, Mr. Leaf, from behind rocks? Did you vote against that?"

"He did not," yelled Blondin. "It was his plan originally."

"You lie," screamed Ryan, "you framed the whole thing up."

"Yes, Mr. C. K. Blondin," cut in Rem Leaf, "you framed the ambush. I got that straight, or at least a hint of it, from Bull Hoskins, the driver of the Stillwater stage, this morning. While the stage isn't due out till to-morrow, my friend Hoskins came over to Hawthorne, pony express, this A. M. That was where your Blue Square Syndicate dropped a stitch. Now tell me about Sam Smilax and tell me quick."

"Why, I——" floundered Blondin, when the clatter of horses' hoofs punctuated the drumming stillness of the desert. While Sandstorm Smith still covered the three men, Rem Leaf rushed out from behind the boulder and caught sight of Sam Smilax, Philander McPike and Dynamite Ed boiling down the Trail on the three of the four runaways they had succeeded in capturing.

Both Sam and McPike had guns in their hands, but they put them away when they saw the unmistakable figure of Rem Leaf leaping up and down and shouting a Comanche greeting.

WHEN the three unhappy ambushers saw Sam Smilax and Dynamite Ed ride their spent and lather-coated mounts round the corner of the boulder, their eyes fairly came out on their cheeks. When Dynamite Ed saw Sandstorm Smith standing guard with a Winchester, he promptly fell off his horse and crawled behind an outcropping of quartz.

"Runs on all fours just like a spider," laughed Sandstorm. "Come on out, Mr. Beatty. I don't kill insects. Glad to meet you, Mr. Smilax. I guessed right that that hired assassin didn't harm you. Now, my advice to you and Mr. Leaf is to start these

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four gentlemen along the Trail to Hawthorne, first gathering up all their shooting jewelry. It's a long way across the alkali and it is possible that they may quarrel. However, that is no concern of ours."

Sam and his partner entirely agreed with this suggestion, and the three members of the Blue Square Syndicate drew a long breath of relief when they learned that the owners of the Yellow Horse were not disposed toward murderous revenge. The only weapons they were permitted to retain were their gold pen knives, a polite utensil that your wildcat mining operator loves to dangle on a chain as evidence of the wealth of his mines.

As Sam Smilax, Rem Leaf and Sandstorm Smith (Philander McPike drove the confiscated buckboard and his three horses) climbed aboard the ore trailer and continued the mule team on its way to Stillwater, they noticed that Dynamite Ed stood aloof from the gentlemen who had engaged him and his sawed-off shotgun and that they had put their heads together in excited conference.

Sandstorm Smith looked back at them in silence for several minutes and then said:

"There's going to be something doing on that jaunt to Hawthorne or I miss my guess. Dynamite Edward Beatty has got his job cut out for him to save his skin. His legs are pretty short for the kind of sprinting that may be required of him."

A LITTLE less than a week subsequent to that episode at the Blue Boulder, Bull Hoskins, driver of the Stillwater-Hawthorne stage, dropped in on a little group before Sad Sidney's counter. Sandstorm Smith signaled to the damp-eyed server to provide Mr. Hoskins with a hand-high drink. Having absorbed the same, the angular gentleman with the walnut tan said:

"That red-headed, square-built party you gents here refer to as Dynamite Ed makes Thorne on the S. P. R. R. night before last. He skips Hawthorne total so far as I can get report of. The other three gents is still down under the skyline. This Dynamite Ed has one arm in a sling and a lame-duck limp. His physog is cut up cruel like a dream book road map of the Bad Lands. Likewise there are lumps and gouges on him like as if he fell off of Tennessee Pass and coasted haphazard to sea level. My friend, Roger Pebble, tank tender at Thorne, takes him into his shack and feeds him back to life. Roger wants him to rest up some, but he can't wait and hikes into the first uptrail caboose, buying a through ticket to Sundown Creek, Idaho. He stakes Roger liberal and seems to be smeared with yellow boys and gold jewelry. I reckon that's the full tale after combing the Trail both ways for evidence."

"You mentioned gold jewelry, Mr. Hoskins," spoke up Rem Leaf, quickly. "Did your friend, Roger, take inventory of such a bauble as a gold knife?"

"The same he did," responded the stage driver, looking hard and suggestively at Sad Sidney and dancing his glass petulantly. "He takes particular notice o' at least two gold knives with the blades cracked out o' them. Maybe there's a third he overlooks. The same, Sad Sidney—only more so."

"And he does all this with his hands, I wonder?" gasps Rem Leaf.

Philander McPike waked up all of a sudden and blinked his eyes. Then he said slowly:

"In the course of our runaway a special particular long slim knife of mine drops overboard. I recall now that after we got together again and restored the person referred to as Dynamite Ed to consciousness we rode back over part of the course originally taken by the runaway. Dynamite Ed is riding behind Mr. Smilax and myself and once he stops his horse, gets down and snatches something out of a gully. Now —— But let's talk about something pleasant."

"Has any one found out," asked Rem Leaf, "who it was who wrote that warning to Sam on the window pane? It's natural, Sam, and I would like to make him a liberal present."

Sad Sidney pricked up his ears, drew a sort of painful smile across his lips and said:

"Up to date there's on'y sixteen ex-agents of the Blue Square Syndicate put in claims ag'in' that reward and every dinged one o' them produces a chunk o' blue chalk in evidence. I got all their names on to a slate so if you wants to you can give 'em numbers an' let 'em draw fer it."

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The Camp-Fire

A Meeting-place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers

HERE'S something from Stephen Chalmers about his collaborator, late of the Northwest Mounted, and in connection with "The Right of Might":

Keefer hated canned beans. I once asked him about this aversion of his and his reply was quite a little story in itself. He and a fellow constable were on the track of—I forget what, now—a horse-thief or something. It was nearing the Spring break-up of the ice when they came to a certain river which they had to cross. They were on snowshoes and the river-ice looked good, especially as it was still coated with unbroken snow. Three-quarters over, the ice gave under them and both constables were splashing in the icy water. As often as they tried to climb upon the broken edge of ice, as often it gave. But by splashing and smashing and elbow-work they made the opposite bank.

THE first thing necessary was to find some shelter, or their clothes would freeze on them. They found a disused shack after a mile or two of travel, built a fire and got dry. But their provisions were about out and such as remained were a nauseous mess from soaking. It was like a fall of manna to find in that old shack—a can of beans! But they had no opener. Did you ever try to open a can of beans when you were cold and hungry and had nothing to open it with? It was like solid iron, that can, probably because the contents were frozen.

It was Keefer who remembered a woodsman's abandoned hut about seven miles away, where he had seen an old ax lying some time previously. They set out cheerily with the prospect of tomatoes and beans—warmed—when they found that ax. Seven miles on snowshoes, hugging the precious can of beans! Suppose the ax were not there? Or suppose they couldn't find it? But they got to the woodsman's abandoned hut, and leg-weariness was forgotten when Keefer, after a brief search, found the ax and flourished it triumphantly. But he did not hack the can open until his partner had built a fire and prepared to receive the tomatoes and beans in a better receptacle for warming. Then, at the word, Keefer placed the can on the ground and gave it a hearty crack with the ax. Next moment both constables were holding their noses tight. Those beans and tomatoes must have been canned before the fall of Babylon. And after all their expectations, too!

"I've never cared for canned beans since," said Keefer.

AND here is a letter from Skaguay, Alaska, also bearing on Keefer and his work with the Northwest Mounted:

In your issue for March, 1913, I was very much interested in Stephen Chalmers's letter referring to Ralph D. Keefer. I was very well acquainted with Ralph Keefer at the time he was a member of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police stationed at a detachment in the Yukon Territory, and I can truthfully say that he was everything that Mr. Chalmers says he was, and then some. I have in my possession now a little token of remembrance that Keefer gave to me personally in the shape of a series of views of the Mounted Police in the Yukon Territory with his autograph across one corner.

A short time ago I noticed a story written by Keefer and Chalmers and I presumed, of course, that it was the Keefer I used to know, as the tales concerned the Mounted Police, and inasmuch as Keefer used to write more or less poetry about the Police and of this northern country.

Mr. Keefer's health was very poor at the time he left this country, and some time after I heard that he had died in the East somewhere, but was never able to learn anything more about him.

If it is not too much trouble would you kindly send me Mr. Chalmers's address as I would like to write him some time and inquire about the last days of my friend. Very truly yours, F. W. FICKARDT.

BOTH Mr. Marsden and Mr. Prickett are seeking in "Lost Trails" for former comrades in the Mashonaland Mounted Police of the British South African Company. Which explains what follows:

Thanks for your letter. I have just received one from Mr. Prickett which I will answer shortly; curiously we must have always just missed one another when in Rhodesia. When he was around Hartley I think I was down near Gwelo.

I wonder if any of your readers have had a similar amusing experience as I had there. The Matabele during the rebellion had stolen all the telegraph-wire between Gwelo and Seluqui, a distance of about 35 miles. I was sent out with Captain Draper to put up the new line.

Our outfit consisted of one saw, one ax, one pair of pliers, one hammer, two single wooden blocks,

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and about 100 feet of ½ in. rope. We had a dozen proper insulators which we used up going out of Gwelo, and the balance of the insulators for the rest of the distance were bottle-necks gathered up around the club. Our help consisted of six Kaffirs. Draper and I did all the splicing and wiring. The wire used was very heavy. The wire was strung through successfully and the first message was sent and answered without a hitch. We wired to trees wherever possible, but had trouble to get the wire high enough to allow elephants and giraffes to pass under.—M. MARSDEN, Vancouver, B. C., Can.

IN A New York paper the other day I read an article headed: "Baseball Growing in Favor in Spain: Natives Take Kindly to America's National Game, and Prospects Are Bright." The article mentioned the fact that baseball leagues have been organized in England, Australia, Canada and Japan. All of which bears indirectly on Bozeman Bulger's article, "Hitting .300 in Havana," as does the world-tour of the Giants and the White Sox as planned at this writing.

To those of you who keep in touch with the national game and the scribes thereof Mr. Bulger will need no introduction.

AWAY back at the June Camp-Fire I somehow made a misstatement about S. B. H. Hurst, whose "Making the Insurance Pay" is in this issue. It was about his having shipped at thirteen in the *Conway* around Cape Horn. The mere fact that he's been around the world some ten times and touched at most of its ports is no excuse for my making him travel in the wrong ship, so I give here his letter by way of tardy reparation:

You must have misunderstood my letter. I was on the *Conway*, all right, but did not go round the Horn in her, for the reason that she is an old three-decker, where boys go to learn navigation, and has not left the River Mersey, so far as I know, for half a century. The ship I went round the Horn in was the *Copley*. I have been round in several others since then, but she was the first. I mention this because many men know the *Conway* and might write you to the effect that I was romancing.

NOW and then Gordon McCreagh will spin us a yarn more or less connected with Colonel Younghusband's expedition into Tibet, particularly as to the seven or eight golden images of Buddha said to have been looted during the occupation of Lhasa. There is, for example, "The Attitude of Meditation" in this issue, the odd title being merely a name for the particular image dealt with in this story, each image having been made in one of the traditional attitudes of the god.

Mr. McCreagh is, of course, in his stories writing fiction, not fact; but he tells me he has many acquaintances scattered through Burma, Borneo, and the Farther East who might take a particular interest in his fictionized form of various incidents that have happened within their knowledge.

A SMALL, neat black rosette with a one-eighth section of red, worn in the lapel of the coat. By that you may know a member of the Adventurers' Club. The Club grows apace. Washington, Pittsburgh and Baltimore are likely to be next in line with organized chapters, and the other day ex-Sergeant Hayter, late of the R. N. W. M. P., stopped off to see me on his way from Canada to England, and took with him names and data for starting a London chapter.

Though, as stated before, the Adventurers' Club has no connection with the Camp-Fire or this magazine, in reply to numerous inquiries I have drawn up data concerning the Club and how to join it, and shall be glad to send it on request.

A WORD on "The Fight" by Octavus Roy Cohen:

THE two characters are drawn from real life, although the story is fiction, pure and simple. Bidwell's prototype is "Laughing Jack" Denning, the New York middleweight, although I fear that Bidwell of the story is a slightly better battler. McCran is drawn from two fighters I have personally known, both of them rather mediocre scrappers but men who were game to the core, and bestial simply because the small-town fight-fans before whom they generally exhibited demanded brutality at the expense of science. The incident at the end of the fight when McCran finishes Bidwell by a broken-arm hook has actually occurred several times in ring history, once in a locally famous fight in Troy, N. Y.

DWIGHT L. LOUGHBOROUGH, if only you are lucky enough to drag them out of him, can tell some interesting things about the Orient and his experiences there. I think he'll forgive me for passing on to you a word about his story in this number, after assuring you that there is no use whatever in asking him for further details concerning the gold.

The yarn is woven about a chap I knew in the Orient several years ago. He was a —— man, a former member of the crew, a millionaire, and a drunkard—until something happened. His name,

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of course, wasn't Hollingsworth. Of the scout I have told you. . . . That gold will be found some day. I saw the quartz, filled with free-milling ore.

When Mr. Loughborough reads the following, he will be, to put it mildly, surprised. Probably his first desire will be to treat me in the same manner as the gentleman about to be mentioned, but as I'm in New York and he is, I think, in Chicago, I yield to temptation and give you a letter that came in to me:

If a stranger may take the liberty, I notice that Dwight Logan Loughborough is sitting in at the Camp-Fire. It may interest your readers to know that, while covering a midnight assignment for the Chicago *Record-Herald* a few years ago, he was held up by an undesirable citizen. The action was swift and brief. Loughborough took the hard man's gun for a souvenir, and left the foolhardy stick-up nursing a very sore jaw.

HERE, again, is the brief explanation of our identification-cards. They are offered free of charge to any of you. All we ask is that you comply carefully with the simple directions as they appear below in italics:

The cards bear this inscription, printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of ADVENTURE, New York, U. S. A., stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. The names and addresses will be treated as confidential by us. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for purposes of business identification. Later, arrangements may perhaps be made for money deposits to cover cable or telegraph notifications. Cards furnished free of charge, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application. Send no applications without the two names and two addresses in full.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Later, for the cost of manufacture, we may furnish, instead of the above cards, a card or tag of aluminum, proof against heat, water and general wear and tear, for adventurers when actually in the jungle, desert, etc.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give the two names and addresses in full when applying.*

(Continued from page 2)

man your own case in full right at the jump, at the same time that you ask him to give you his the same way. If you don't give him anything to judge by, how can you expect him to select you or even bother with your letter when he is getting scores of letters from other good men who *do* give him something to judge by?

To return to No. W 71. Here is his letter. You will see that he evidently—and quite rightly—did not reply to vague applications when he had plenty of fully stated ones to choose from.

Permit me to thank you for the kind way in which you forwarded me my letters, and which enabled me to make the selection of the five men that I needed. You may use this in "Camp-Fire" if you wish, and indeed I should be grateful if you would, as I would like to take this method to thank all of those who replied to my wanted notice, and whom I was not able to answer.

My plans are now all made out, and they are simply this—bird-of-paradise hunting in central Borneo. My five men and myself will sail from 'Frisco about the first of the year, and it will be about eighteen months before we return. I regret that at present I can not tell you more, and that I must ask that if you use this in "Camp-Fire" to use my number, 71, as just at the present time I do not care to have my name brought out in connection with it. Kindly also send me an identification card.

HERE's a word from Hugh Lofting:

During my sojourn in Nigeria, in the British West African Civil Service, an inherent interest in all things scientific led me to investigate, to the small extent that was possible in my circumstances, the lore of the local Medicine Man. I discovered a lot that was astonishing, a little that was scientific and valuable, and a great deal that was humbug. I am not going to disclose precisely how much of "Ilari" is true, but I have no hesitation in stating that all of the story falls well within the bounds of possibility and that most of the characters are drawn from experience.

I HAD a letter yesterday from Maurice Drake, whom you will remember as the author of the serial "WO_2." Most of our writers I know personally, at least by correspondence, but as I bought his story through his American agent, I knew only that Mr. Drake is an Englishman and well known as a writer on the other side. It seems that he is an artist in decorative glass, an authority in matters connected with this work, and the author of several books pertaining to it. Fiction with him is a sideline. From a clipping sent me by his English publishers I find that he is "a big, brawny, mustached, sunburned man of forty-two, who looks what he is, namely, an ardent yachtsman. Everything in connection with the sea interests him."

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN

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WANTED

—MEN *and* ADVENTURES

NOTE.—We offer this corner of the Camp-Fire, free of charge, to such of our readers as may care to avail themselves of it. Naturally we can not vouch for any of the letters, the writers thereof, or any of the claims set forth therein, beyond the fact that we receive and publish these letters in good faith. We reserve the privilege of not publishing any letters or part of a letter. Any inquiry for adventures sent to this magazine will be considered as intended for publication, at our discretion, in this department, with all names and addresses given therein printed in full, unless such inquiry contains contrary instructions. In the latter case we reserve the right to substitute for real names any numbers or other names. We are ready to forward mail through this office, but assume no responsibility therefor.

WANT hunting, prospecting or exploring almost anywhere with agreeable party. 25 years' experience along these lines; hunted and guided in Rocky Mountains from Canada to Green River, Wyo. Big fortune from Goldfield lost in panic of 1897. Expert carpenter and mechanic. Age 47.—Address W. I. BOOTH, Elks, San Francisco.

ENGLISHMAN from London, age 36, 5 ft. 9 in., 160 lbs., perfect health and strength. Since leaving school 22 years ago have lived in the Five Continents and sailed the Seven Seas. 25 months' active service Boer War, mounted corps and artillery; volunteered for the Zululand rebellion against Dinizulu and Bambata. Punched cows in Australia, boundary rider, etc. 18 months Cape Town Fire Brigade. Sailed before the mast in English and American sailing vessels; also steam, one trip as coal-trimmer. Hunted big game in Africa and Canada; good shot with modern rifles. Served in many other capacities. First-class education. Ready to go anywhere at any time and willing to take any risk so long as there is something in it besides adventure.—Address FRANK WILKINSON, Hotel Canada, Vancouver, B. C.

AGE 24, 6 ft., 160 lbs., good health. Wish position in South America or would like to take part in any adventure to any place, provided there is money in it.—Address Box 1036, El Paso, Texas.

NORWEGIAN, age 22, 9 ft. 1 in., 170 lbs. Worked some on surveying parties in Minnesota. A few times up and down the coast from Vancouver, B. C., to San Francisco. Would like to get on a surveying or exploring party. No money, but would like to make some. Can work; stickerman by trade; have worked in all woods, hard and soft.

Yours sincerely,
THOR THORSEN, 1316 E. 28th St., Tacoma, Wash.

AGE 29, 5 ft. 7 in., 145 lbs., in perfect condition, but wear glasses. Have punched cows, carpentered, sold real estate, worked in the logging-woods. Fairly competent transit man; been employed as such for the last 4 months. Most of last eight years spent in mining and prospecting in northern British Columbia, northern Ontario and Quebec; worked at several of the best known mines in Cobalt and Porcupine. Am not looking for thrilling adventure, am no daredevil; am a good shot with either rifle or six-shooter, but so far have not a very extensive private burial-ground. Can give good references, and usually make good on anything I tackle.—Address No. W 187.

TWO men, partners for years, are looking for an adventurous proposition. We have been through the Congo, sent out with an expedition by the Belgan Government. Prospected and trekked through Rhodesia, Natal, German East Africa, etc. Under Stanley in the Mexican trouble. Lately returned from extensive trip in South America. Willing to hook up with any good expedition with something in it. No wild-goose chases considered.—Address No. W. 137.

OPEN for employment as guide to any big-game hunter or party going to Africa. Experienced. Further information on request.—Address J. LAURSEN, Gen. Del., North Yakima, Wash.

AGE 26, healthy, single, no boozer, good education, good shot, common cow-hand and rider. Want to go out with some party. No objection where. Can furnish references.—Address No. W 188.

AGE 27, 6 ft., 175 lbs. Left home at eight years, worked in lumber camps in Louisiana, Texas and Georgia, later cruiser in Oregon and California. Tourist guide in Central and South America, Cuba and Hawaii. Speak Spanish and Hawaiian fluently. Have managed a line of lumber yards, been traveling salesman, territory all West of Mississippi. Prospected in Alaska and California, and hunted big game in the West and North. All-around athlete, crack shot with pistol or rifle, and can shoot and not talk. Will take the longest chance you want for a corresponding remuneration. Will go anywhere. Have made and lost three fair fortunes, and will take another chance.—Address No. W 182.

WANT to join a trip or exploration about March or April. Native-born American, age 19, 5 ft. 11 in., 165 lbs. Handle rifle well, also canoe. High-school education; pretty well read in chemistry. Can speak some German and a bit of Norwegian. Have knocked about lumber camps, and I expect to pass the Winter in one as cookee. Can mind my own business and keep my mouth shut. Don't smoke, drink or gamble. Can not promise any capital, but can work my way. Prefer Mexico or Central America.—Address RAYMOND KNUDSON, Bruce, Wis.

AGE 19, thin as a rail, 6 ft. 4 in. High-school graduate. Can walk 50 miles a day. Have worked on a farm all Summer and don't want to go back to office work. Want something out in the open with some money attached.—Address No. W 184.

SERVED 8 years in State Militia. One year's experience as time-keeper and 5 years as lumber-grader. Anxious to secure position in Cuba, lower South America, or to locate in the Western part of U. S. Can play football or baseball, also box well. Willing to work at moderate salary awhile, to get out and see some of this old world. Willing to go anywhere. 5 ft. 9 in., 155 lbs., age 28.—Address J. T. M., R. F. D. 2, Box 32, Lake Charles, La.

AMERICAN born, age 37, 5 ft. 11 in., 185 lbs. Military service in the P. I. (1900-1902) with never a day's sickness. At home in saddle, but can hike some, too. Familiar with small arms; used to roughing it, can obey orders and tend to my own business. Expert at placer-mining and prospecting, shipping clerk, and herding men in R. R. Const.; work with Japs and Hindus. Ready to go anywhere on moment's notice, tropical countries preferred. Do not consider danger or hardships if there is any adventure and some of the long green in sight. Strictly temperate; no use whatsoever for booze-fighters. Am free of any entanglements, and willing to give further data.—Address No. W 186.

BORN in East India, son of Sergt.-Maj. Fowler of 12th Royal Lancers, Canada. Four years at sea, two on Great Lakes; five wrecks. Dining-car service, hotel cook. Worked for gold-mining company, structural ironworks, and as a fence rider. Transport service during Boer

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War and Spanish-American War. Adventure wanted. Would like to go to Africa. Address THOS. FOWLER, care ADVENTURE.

AGE 21, good health. Four years' experience with automobile and gasoline engines; can run and keep up any kind of gasoline engine, stationary, marine or automobile. Will go anywhere if there's any money in it, except Polar regions.—Address GEO. D. COMER, Comer, Ga.

ANY one looking for a pal that can ride, rope, shoot, pack, track, etc., for a trip anywhere in South America south of ten degrees south latitude, just ring me up.—Address No. W 189.

WANT adventure. Traveled through England, France, Holland, and part of U. S. Open for anything. Know the U. S. Army regulations (infantry); can handle rifle or revolver, 6 ft., and unmarried.—Address No. W 190.

AM NON-COMMISSIONED officer in the U. S. Army, good clerk, know something of telegraphy. Six feet, temperate, and not afraid of hardships or work. Will be discharged April 1, and would like to go with some bona-fide expedition, preferably an arctic exploring outfit, but would go on any trip for the excitement it offers.—Address CORPORAL T. P. LEONARD, Co. I, 18th U. S. Inf., Texas City, Tex.

AGE 28, 5 ft. 4 in., 180 lbs. Bored to death with city life. Carpenter and cook by trade. Supposed to be pretty fair with rifle or shot-gun, and am a decent all-round athlete. Want to hear from some person with a good adventurous and paying proposition and wanting a partner. The more exciting, the better. Prefer prospecting in some unexplored land, preferably in southern countries.—Address ARTHUR STOKES, 98 Grange Av., Toronto, Can.

WAS sailor and soldier in the U. S. Army and Navy, but found that too tame. Was in Lower California with Pryce and Mosby. Anxious to join something with a little change in it. Been in foreign countries as far south as the Fiji Islands, and in 25 States of U. S. Good shot with rifle or six-shooter, and a good rider; was in the Light Field and Mountain Artillery. Age 28, 5 ft. 7 in., 148 lbs.—Address ALBERT KOLLMAN, 8711 Pearl St., New Orleans, La.

AGE 24, 6 ft., 170 lbs. Employed last five years in confidential capacities by persons who have shaped destiny of Mexico and Central America. Thorough metropolitan training and intimate knowledge of Mexican and Central American political and diplomatic affairs. Know both places well. Speak Spanish. Code Expert. Would be pleased to correspond with any one desiring secret agent or confidential man of executive ability and utmost discretion. Reason for leaving present employment: have been confined to confidential work in New York, Washington, and New Orleans for two years, and want to operate "outside."—Address No. W. 191.

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE—As stated in our last issue, our "Wanted" department has grown until it was bigger than the whole "Camp-Fire" used to be. Lately we have saved space by using smaller type and by cutting the long items to their essential facts. As explained in the last two issues, we see a way to save still more space and yet keep the department as efficient as before.

Each month only notices of adventures or expeditions seeking men will be printed. All notices of men seeking adventures will be omitted. This will accomplish just as much as heretofore. Indeed, it will simplify matters and save time. If you are one of those seeking adventures, send us no notice; all you have to do is to watch this column for opportunities offered.

Such unpublished items as came in to us before our November warning appear in this number, but after this only items asking for men will be printed. *We are now taking no more notices from men seeking adventures.*

I have an idea that this new plan will do far more than save space, and that the department will grow into something bigger and more practical even than it has been.

AGE 23, healthy and full of ginger. Have been hunter and trapper for some years. Would like to meet a young man of my own age who will take a big trip up North, Montana and Washington, and maybe Canada. Will cost about $150 for expenses; to be gone 2 years. Considerable money will be made, but you must like the life and not leave any things dragging behind.—Address G. R. BOYLAN, Farnum, Idaho.

WANT to get up a small party to search for buried treasure. About 9 or 10 who could afford to lose what they put in it. Would cost considerably under $500 per man. As our data is not yet complete, we would probably be gone 4 or 5 months if it took much finding.

A Spanish ship from South America was almost off Cadiz in 1804 before her captain learned there was war between Spain and England. He turned about for the Indies, to save his treasure, but the crew mutinied, stabbed him, and buried the loot. They intended to go to England, buy another ship and come back for it. Their own ship, of course, was marked. Lack of a navigator caused them to be wrecked, and most were drowned. Lack of good anchorage kept two English parties from working, between them, more than 5 days, and the treasure is still there. The surface is so cut up by storms, etc., that detailed instructions are of no value. Its approximate location, though, is known, and I think I could find it with my instrument for the location of buried treasure. The instrument is an adaptation and simplification of one used by the U. S. surveyors. Its action depends upon the supposition that any treasure that may be buried has a bit of iron or steel among it. All the recovered treasure I know of has had some iron about it, the hinge of a chest, a knife, a steel buckle, etc.

If I can not get up a party of my own I would like to hear from some one else who could use my apparatus and me.—Address No. W 5.

WANT 15 or 20 people to go to South America with me on a prospecting and exploring trip. May be plenty of excitement, and I believe plenty of gold and other things to pay us handsomely.—Address CLYDE WARD, 531 N. 23rd St., Birmingham, Ala.

AGE 19, 5 ft. 6 in., 118 lbs. Bookkeeper, typewriter, can take charge of any small newspaper or printing office. Have punched in New Mexico, can shoot, fair photographer, herded cows in Wyoming, flunkey, newsboy on trains, hoboed, was with carnival company in the West, something of a hypnotist. Want to go back West or to some foreign country, particularly South America. No money for transportation, but want to get in touch with some kind of a job, or partner who will travel.—Address GUY E. NEFF, 726 Superior St., Toledo, O.

AMERICAN, age 33 years, 5 ft. 6 in., 138 lbs. Good shot with rifle or revolver. Have followed the sea and had some experience as a soldier. My religion is Theosophy. Ready for any adventure in any part of the world.—Address No. W 178.

EXPERT taxidermist in fur, fin and feather, and hold a certificate for first aid. Good shot; age 25; healthy. Willing to go to any country.—Address JOHN SULLIVAN, Lake Magantee, Quebec, Canada.

AGE 26, 6 ft. 1 in., 180 lbs. Irish-American. Aviator, aeronaut. Have punched cattle. All around athlete and long-distance runner. Good fighter, with or without gloves. Good shot and swimmer; understand all kinds of steam boilers. Do not use tobacco and never took a drink in my life. Ready for anything honest, nothing barred. My life I think of last. Will go anywhere on earth, just so there is lots of adventure and risk. Have traveled lots and will travel more. Can furnish proofs and references.—Address No. W 179.

AGE 19, 5 ft. 7 in., 157 lbs. Expert with a rifle and handy with a Colt. Raised in the West. Two years of college. Traveled the continent, hunted in Canada. Now looking for something lively. Willing to take a hand in

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anything.—Address STEWARD G. DAVIS, 2703 N. Clark St., Chicago.

TWO brothers, ages 22 and 25, 5 ft. 9 in., and 5 ft. 10 in., 160 and 210 lbs., wish to join expedition with something in it. Or employment in Central or South America in banana or rubber plantations. Californians; five years' experience with bananas in Nicaragua. Have knocked around U. S. and Canada. Physically sound; use rifle or revolver. Willing to go into anything with ample rewards, but have nothing to invest except experience.—Address No. W 181.

AMERICAN, age 33. 5 ft. 7 in., 150 lbs. Perfect health. Served with the 20th Kansas Vol., in the Philippines, 1898-9. Three years and a half in regular army, purchasing discharge in 1910; two years of this in Philippines. When discharged was Q. M. Sergt. of my Company. Would like adventure of any kind promising excitement and a show of making some money. Have no capital.—Address No. W 183.

TWO excellent discharges from Army; over 2 years in the Islands. Been in every State of U. S. and around the world twice. Expert rifle and pistol shot. First-Class Gunner of Coast Artillery. Can furnish A1 references from Army officers and private parties. Strong and healthy, fit for any trouble or climate. Immune to typhoid and yellow fever. Anxious to join expedition to South America or Peru. Ready on or after March 20, when I receive my discharge. Would like to hear from Jack Tate. Age 25, 5 ft. 8 in., 164 lbs.—Address No. W 201.

READY after Feb. 15 for anything promising action and suitable returns. Will go anywhere. Age 27, over 6 ft., 170 lbs. Good health always, use no booze. Been adventuring since fourteen, mostly range-riding in U. S., Canada and Mexico. Have several firsts in riding and roping contests. Know the range business in all its phases. Good woodsman, also a miner, and have had good success in handling men. Have burned powder in two or three private wars, beside which the average Mexican revolution would seem like a Fourth of July celebration in a country village. References to responsible parties.—Address No. W 180.

FAIR education, age 19, 5 ft. 11 in., 145 lbs., good health. Smoke occasionally, but touch no intoxicating liquors. Can play any game from tennis to craps. Fair horseman and rifle-shot, pretty good all-around athlete, having won medals for running and jumping. Can make myself desirable in a millionaire's drawing-room or in any hole of a barroom in Calcutta, when occasion demands. Looking for something interesting to write about and any extra "coin" which might turn up if I can get it straight. Willing to do my share of the work. Come from good family, but have a desire for outdoor life.

Want something that will build me up and make a man out of me.—Address No. W 202.

AGE 23, strong and healthy. Have been two years in the show business, one year as assistant manager of a large corporation, restaurant manager in New York, rancher here in Arizona. Can shoot anything, tireless in the saddle, understand bookkeeping, medicine, law, and commissary work. Spent one Winter in the North woods as a lumberman, am a good cook. Am at present bookkeeper and timekeeper in a convict camp located near here. Would like an expedition of some sort, with expenses paid, and a chance to make a big stake or go broke all on one throw—Address No. 203.

OPEN for anything and not out wholly for money. Spent a year and a half in South America, crossed it on foot; also have been in Africa, Mexico, Europe and want to go again. American, age 29, steady.—Address T. E. Burton, R. F. D. 2, Box 55, Hemet, Calif.

AMERICAN, age 29, speak Spanish, Portuguese and Caripuni dialect; immune from malaria, expert rifleman, good pistol shot, amateur aviator (grass-cutter), some military experience, cowpuncher, sailor and other things too numerous to mention. Wish to join anything with fair return in money or excitement. Must be south of 25 degrees N. Lat.—Address No. W 204.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE.—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with any old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, give your own name if possible. All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relatives Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

TAYLOR McDANIELS. Or any one knowing his whereabouts since July 1, 1911. His mother has asked me to locate him. 5 ft. 11 in. tall, blue eyes, heavy shoulders, a decided swinging walk. Born in Bluefield, Va., moved to Des Moines, Iowa. Fought forest fires in Idaho in 1910. Left me in June, 1910, in Spokane, to go to Seattle. A druggist by trade.—Address MR. T. W. EVANS, Gen. Del., Spokane, Wash.

L. H. DWIGHT. Hospital Corps of a Pennsylvania regiment in the Philippines in 1900. Send address to GEO. M. MOORE, Gen. Del., Buffalo, N. Y.

THOMAS GEORGE NIXON MORRIS, generally called George Norris. My lost son. He left England March 9, 1905, in the S. S. *Tunisian* from Liverpool for Canada. Last heard of in Winnipeg in 1907.

He would be 25 years of age in February. Well educated, but had been working, I believe, on a construction gang.

I have lately arrived here from Australia, and should be very much obliged to any one giving me any news of him. Address T. N. MORRIS, care Canadian Bank of Commerce, San Francisco, Cal.

WOULD like to have some of the "boys" that were in Co. E, 20th U. S. Infantry, 1895 to 1897; Troop E 7th U. S. Cavalry, 1897-8; Hospital Corps, 23rd U. S. Infantry (Manila, P. I.); Hosp. Corps (Jolo, Jolo Island, P. I.); Hosp. Corps, 40th U. S. Vol. Inf. (Northern Mindanao Island), write to me. Known throughout the Army as "Oklahoma Pete."—Address GEO. M. KNISLEY, Box 218, Mount Vernon, Wash.

JOE MOULDER, who traveled with me through England, Wales, and other countries four years ago. Last heard from in Southampton, Eng. Height 5 ft. 8 in., blue eyes and light hair and scar on right cheek.—Address No. L. T. 178.

HERMAN STEARNS, who was in the employ of the Cambridge Bridge Co. of Boston 20 to 25 years ago in the capacity of draftsman. An old Florida pal.—Address J. H. BYER, 216 29th Av. So., Seattle.

ANY one who served in the 4th Inf. Texas Volunteers in the war with Spain. Especially any one who has a roster of 4th Texas for sale.—Address HARVY MORRIS, Co. D. 22nd U. S. Inf., 6th Brigade, 2nd Division, U. S. A., Texas City, Galveston, Texas.

RICHARD L. SHEPHERD. Please let him know that his loving mother is anxious to hear of him. Owing to some misunderstanding on his part, he has ceased to communicate. Last heard of in Vancouver, B. C.—Address MRS. SHEPHERD, 9 Irene Av., Toronto, Ont., Canada.

CORPORAL GUITO K. SUITE. Formerly of San Antonio, Tex. My old pal. I think he is somewhere in New Jersey.—Address J. R. MELLIFF, Pleasanton, Tex.

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GEORGE B. CRAVEN. Last heard of with *Morning Star*, Wilmington, N. C.—Address Box 306, Fort Myers, Fla.

A. G. CHRISTENSEN. Came to South America from Africa in earlier part of 1904. Write his old friend, A. C. WALLIS, 22 Minot St., Neponset, Mass.

JIM CONELLY. Last in Congo district, Africa, doing patrol duty in '88-9. Last I heard was in 1900. News wanted.—Address T. M. REAP, Hennessey, Okla.

ISAAC RAANSVAAL. Last heard of on way to Philippines, Co. I, 9th U. S. I.—Address DICK NAIL, 1804 Clarence St., Dallas, Tex.

SOME of my comrades who were with me around Ladysmith (Natal) and along the Tugela River, and were with me under General Rosmussen (Schwartz Maria), under Feldtcornet Rourke (I am not certain as to the correct spelling of this name, but that is how it sounded), and also under Feldtcornet Van der Merve, who were there on October 30, 1899, and on January 6, 1900, and were with me up to June 28, 1900. Would also like to hear of some of the boys who were with me at Diyatalowa and Ragama Camps in Ceylon as prisoners of war, particularly John Murray, Tom Morrows, James McTigh, and Jack Ryan.—Address JOHN BUSSANICH, 5834 18th Ave. South, Seattle, Wash.

WILLIAM CHALMERS SMITH. Last heard of in Chihuahua, Mexico, working as mine superintendent for New York Co. News wanted by his nephew.—Address BYRON L. ANGELL, R. F. D. 1., Box 85, Oleander, Fresno Co., Cal.

FRED KNUDSEN. Sailed with me from Antwerp to Frisco on the British ship *Red Rock*. Thence to Tacoma, via British bark *Balmoral*, and from Port Townsend to Shanghai on the schooner *Willis A. Holden*. Served with me in the Imperial Maritime Customs of China. (Shanghai, Hankow and Woosung).

Frisco Earthquake and Hongkong Typhoon together—when we thought this old world radically at variance with the conservative ideals of peace-inclined but sadly shaken humanity.

It took an accident to part us, but to part we had.—Address ALFRED S. BIRKENHYME, Covington, La.

JASPER. Became acquainted with him in Key West in the late Summer of 1911. Last heard of in Havana en route for Mexican coast, about December, 1911. News wanted. Also would like to hear from any of my OLD SHIPMATES of the *Lyderhorn*, British four-masted bark, 1902-3-4.—Address PERCY MORRISS, 1310 E. 64th St., Chicago.

AL. H. BROOKS. Formerly rancher near Calgary, Canada. Please write his old friend, A. H. Bull, Albuquerque, N. M.

BENJAMIN F. MEGIE. Left the U. S. some 5 or 6 years ago for South America and South Africa. Please write A. H. BULL, Albuquerque, N. M.

JAMES DALZIEL. With me from Seattle to Antwerp on the bark *Socotra* around Cape Horn in 1901. Please write CHIEF ENGINEER, Steamship *Florida*, Port Arthur, Texas.

ROBERT F. CATON. Please write A. S. HOFFMAN, care ADVENTURE.

WILLIS CORY. Called Red, Kentuck, or Wins Golden. In Philippines 1903-4, and '05 in Tex. Last heard of 1906, California. Address wanted.—Address No. L. T. 79.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

WILLIAM O'MEARA. Of Waterford, Ireland. Shipped with me in 1886 out of London on bark *Guiana* of Glasgow to Falkland Islands, Mauritius, Demerara, London again, Newport News; then a year in coasting trade.—Address PHILIP MCGOVERN, 920 Lackawanna Av., Elmira, N. Y.

MILES G. WILEY. Once Private Co. I, 11th Ill. Inf., and captain Co. E and major 7th Ill. Cav. Any one who served with him please write JOHN M. GRAHAM, Deming, N. M.

CONRAD A. ENGESSER. My brother. On U. S. Monitor *Monadnock* in Spanish War. In Tacoma till about 1904, Panama Mounted Police 1906. Possibly with Madero 1910-11. Age about 39. Last saw him when sailing for Panama, Thanksgiving, 1909.—Address ERNA ENGESSER LANBLY, 1232 54th St., Borough Park, Brooklyn, N. Y.

WILLIAM LE VONDE. Please write. Very important.—Address W. L. CUMMING, care ADVENTURE.

CLARENCE RAE, P. I. R. Old messmate. Want him to go to Mexico with me. News wanted.—Address No. L. T. 173.

JIMMIE GIBNEY, F. A. SHERWOOD. Write E. J. Roese, 3668a Botanical Av., St. Louis.

EDWARD P. DOYLE. Last heard of in the 7th U. S. Cav., Co. H., 1905. Any one giving information would be doing a great favor to his brother, JAMES J. DOYLE, care U. S. Conditioning & Testing Co., 340 Hudson St., New York.

DIS HOLBROOK. The DENY brothers.—Address CHARLES D. BEAN, 9 Masonic Temple, Geneva, N. Y.

HARRY G. ROBERTSON. My uncle. Served in U. S. Custom House, Manila. Last heard from in Seattle. —Address R. PYRON CONNOLLY, La Grange, Ga.

WILLIAM MCELWAIN. Please write your old pal.—Address ICH, 1626 Truxton Av., Bakersfield, Cal.

JOHN SERRANO. Please write A. S. HOFFMAN, care ADVENTURE.

CAPTAIN C. D. MORINE. Last heard of as mate of ship *Atlas* about 5 or 6 years ago. News wanted.—Address No. L. T. 166.

F. E. SMITH. Resigned from Annapolis to enlist in navy for Spanish War. On *Olympia* at Manila; Philippines; Boxer trouble. Last heard from was 2nd Lieut. of Marines. Word wanted by DANNY SHARPE, 537 Temple St., Los Angeles.

JACK BONHAM. Born Hastings, Eng. Band of Royal Sussex 1900-6. To Sherbrooke, P. Q., Canada, March 1906. Last heard from Aug. 1906, Sherbrooke. Natural musician. Word wanted by mother. Address MRS. JEAN BONHAM, care ADVENTURE.

ALBERT SARFATTY and FRANK CRIZER please write A. S. HOFFMAN, care ADVENTURE.

MANUSCRIPTS sent us by the following are being held by us, having been returned to us as unclaimed at the addresses furnished:

Julia A. Sill, New York; Horatio Langford King, Galveston, Texas; W. Lynch, Trenton, N. J.; W. Mack, Pachica, Mexico; Henry W. Edwards, New York; W. G. Gormley, Ontario, Canada; George Stillions, Chicago, Ill.; Francis Manson, Chicago, Cal.

THE following have been inquired for in previous issues of "Lost Trails." They can get name of inquirer from this magazine or from the last four issues of ADVENTURE for 1913.

Chas. Bush; John W. ("Red") Bardsley; Big Mentusha; "Lee" or P. M. Morris; James, Thomas and A. K. Barwick; Roland Henry Crane; Wm. G. Tice; L. Clayton Randall; Jack Costelloe; Patrick, Michael and James Cunningham; comrades of "Lintic" O'Shea or El Rayo; Ed (Wessel) Deckard; J. W. McKenzie; Frank Miller; John and Lee Cramford; Capt. Vaughn, or any comrades of Percy Tressidder; Capt. F. T. Parker; T. S. M. Cottrell, Corp. McEwen, Cooper, Sergt. Dacombe, Troop B, M. M. P., also Capt. Nesbitt and other comrades; Howard Irwin; Gulliver; Jesse E. Sherick ("Pat"); Gordon Law, Simon P. Culp; Charles Goolrick; comrades of F. E. Van Leue; A. S. O'Connor, Bob Ross, Jimmie Van Damme, Hans Kufeke, Jack Griffiths, Julian Harries, Jack Gardiner, Troops E and C. B. S. A. P.; Edward J. Raeder; Martin Lane; Charlie Sutherland, B. M. P.; Jack Prout, Fred Scott; George Dean; Oscar Smith; Percy M. Du Bois, R. R. Plum, Joe Enscoe, Charles Carruthers, Lester Selig, Thos. L. Hogan, Andy Osbourne of the *Evening Star*; Pete Meissner.

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Do you want a job where you have the *"Say so"* instead of the "Do so"?

Do you want a job in which you work with your brains instead of your hands?

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Electric Wireman	Window Trimming
Telephone Expert	Show Card Writing
Architect	Lettering & Sign Painting
Building Contractor	Advertising
Architectural Draftsman	Commercial Illustrating
Structural Engineer	Industrial Designing
Concrete Construction	Commercial Law
Mechan. Engineer	Automobile Running
Mechanical Draftsman	Teacher
Refrigeration Engineer	English Branches
Civil Engineer	Good English for Every One
Surveyor	Agriculture
Mine Superintendent	Poultry Farming
Metal Mining	Plumbing & Steam Fitting
Locomotive Fireman & Eng.	Sheet Metal Worker
Stationary Engineer	Navigation / Spanish
Textile Manufacturing	Languages / French
Gas Engines	Chemist / German

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Present Employer _____

Street and No. _____

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The 1914 Timepiece

The ***masterpiece*** *of watch manufacture—the* ***Burlington Special****—19 jewels,* ***adjusted*** *to the second—****adjusted*** *to positions—****adjusted*** *to temperatures—****adjusted*** *to isochronism. Open face or hunting case, ladies' or gentlemen's.*

Special Burlington Offer!

The Superb Burlington Watch **now** at the *direct* rock-bottom price — the same price that **even the wholesale** jeweler must pay—and in order to encourage everybody to secure this watch at once, pay this rock-bottom price, either for cash or $2.50 a month on this great special offer! We send the watch on approval, **prepaid.** You risk absolutely nothing—you pay nothing, not one cent, unless you want this *exceptional* offer after seeing and thoroughly inspecting the watch. Read the coupon below.

New Book on Watches!

Send Free Coupon

FREE Book Coupon

Learn the inside facts about watch prices, and the many superior points of the Burlington over double-priced products. Just send the coupon or a letter or a postal. Get this offer while it lasts.

Burlington Watch Co.
19th St. and Marshall Blvd.
Dept **1451** Chicago, Ill.

Burlington Watch Co.
19th Street and Marshall Blvd.
Chicago
Dept. **1451**

Please send me (without obligation and prepaid) your free book on watches and a copy of your $1,000 challenge, with full explanation of your cash or $2.50 a month offer on the Burlington Watch.

Name.....

Address.....

New Ideas In Watch Cases!

Newest Ideas: Inlay Enamel Monograms, Block and Ribbon Monograms, Diamond Set, Lodge, French Art, Dragon Designs.

Open face or hunting case, ladies' or gentlemen's 12 and 16 sizes.

Imagine a beautiful hunting case with your own monogram on one side and the emblem of your lodge or any other emblem on the other side. Our catalog shows complete illustrations. See coupon.

The Movement!

In connection with our sweeping *direct* offer we have selected our **finest** highest grade watch for a special offer direct to the people. **Material:** *The best that money can buy.* **Workmen:** *World renowned experts in their line.*

The Jewels: 19 finest grade selected genuine imported rubies and sapphires, absolutely flawless. (It is well understood in the railroad business that 19 jewels is the proper number for maximum efficiency.)

Factory Fitted and factory tested. Fitted right at the factory into the case made for that watch—and *re-timed* after fitting. No looseness or wearing of the parts. No rattle or jar.

Adjustment: *Adjusted to temperature* AND *isochronism* AND *positions.* The most rigid tests.

That $1,000.00 Challenge

money still lies in the bank waiting, waiting for four years for someone who dares to make a competitive test with the Burlington Special. Ever since we dared to come out with our DIRECT OFFER at the **rock bottom** price, we have been waiting for someone to cover the challenge money in a test with the *higher priced* products. Why **don't** they accept? Look at a Burlington Special, the perfect works the exquisite case, consider the rock bottom price, and **you'll know why our challenge stands unaccepted!**

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